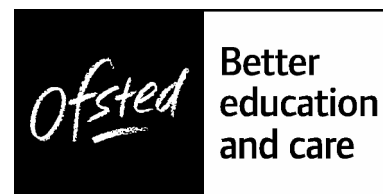


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Mr Donovan Spencer  
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Dear Mr Spencer

#### Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme 2006/7 – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 and 21 September to look at work in history.

The visit provided much useful evidence for reporting in history. The institution will not be named in any publication without your permission and most evidence will be used at a general level, to identify trends and issues for development.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in my feedback at the end of the visit, to support development in history.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be adequate.

#### Achievement and standards

The standards achieved by pupils in history are average and pupils make satisfactory progress.

- They are developing good skills in extracting information from different sources and recording this accurately, for example, when identifying key features of the lifestyles of native North Americans.
- They bring together information into increasingly longer pieces of writing, leading to a good standard of work in, for example, GCSE coursework.

- They are able to recall key information about the events they have studied, but struggle to explain the causes. Often they do not use systematic ways to analyse sources, relying on general observations, for example when considering what paintings and pictures of artefacts reveal.
- Their behaviour in lessons is good. They respond well to their teachers and most apply themselves to the tasks they are given. They are polite and relationships between pupils and teachers are mutually respectful.

## Quality of provision

Teaching and learning in history are satisfactory with some good features.

- Teaching is thoughtful and considered. Teachers have a good knowledge of the subject. They make effective use of a useful range of resources, including interactive whiteboards, which enable them to display high quality images of historical sources. Lessons have a clear structure. A variety of activities is used, including questions and answer, observation, discussion, group work and written tasks.
- There is a good focus on using open-ended questions, which is particularly effective when teachers give individual support to pupils. However, currently, the teaching fails to excite pupils and make more explicit the links between past learning and current tasks.
- Most marking of pupils' work provides them with accurate and clear feedback on what they have done well and need to improve, but some provides only general comments and exhortation to do better. Teachers are beginning to involve pupils in marking their own and each other's work and this is beginning to improve their understanding of what they need to learn.
- Teaching materials have been prepared to allow a range of approaches to meet the needs of different pupils, but their use does not feature strongly in teachers' planning or lessons.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the history curriculum is adequate. Statutory requirements are met.

- The scheme of work for Key Stage 3 is being developed and makes good links to improving pupils' literacy and use of ICT.
- The scheme of work at Key Stage 4 is made up of a collection of suitable modules, but this has not been brought together sufficiently to form a fully coherent scheme of work.

- Departmental planning gives thought to how the pupils will progress, but does not take sufficient account of what pupils have achieved at Key Stage 2.
- The curriculum is enriched through visits to the Holocaust Memorial Centre and a local study as part of the GCSE course.
- Pupils' ability to state their targets, how well they are doing in history and what precisely they need to do better varies considerably. More able and committed pupils give clear and precise answers, but many others are very vague.
- The number of pupils opting for history has been low in recent years and pupils do not speak convincingly about the information and guidance they have been offered about the subject.

### Subject leadership and management

The leadership and management of history are satisfactory.

- The basic functions of monitoring and reviewing the work of the subject are carried out in accordance with a planned programme. This results in detailed records about pupils' work.
- Targets are set for pupils' attainment.
- The school's assessment of the quality of its work in history is reasonably accurate, but lacks a sufficiently clear analysis of the strengths and areas needing development in terms of both standards and the quality of teaching. It does not make sufficient use of the evidence that comes from the monitoring and review programme.
- The departmental development plan lacks precise criteria for judging the success of the department's work and timescales and resource allocations are vague. The department provides professional development opportunities for staff, including individual support by the head of department, but this is not linked to the development plan.
- Methods for tracking pupils' progress and evaluating the progress made by different groups of pupils are under-developed.

### Overall effectiveness of the subject

The overall effectiveness of history is satisfactory. Pupils make adequate progress overall, and reach standards that are broadly average. Their personal development is good. Teaching is satisfactory with some good features. Improvements have been made to the range of teaching styles used and in the involvement of pupils in assessing their own work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring departmental self-evaluation provides a clearer account of the strengths and weaknesses in the subject based on evidence from monitoring and reviewing performance and activities; and that this information is used to plan further developments
- improving the tracking of pupils' progress and analysis and evaluation of the relative progress of different groups
- using more teaching methods that motivate pupils towards the subject; and make more explicit the links between past learning and current tasks.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop history in the school.

As explained in my previous letter, a copy of this feedback will be sent to your Local Authority and will be made available to the team for your next institutional inspection. It will also be published on the Ofsted website.

Yours sincerely

Clive Moss  
Her Majesty's Inspector