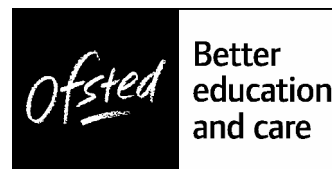


Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



01 March 2007

Mr J Martin
Headteacher
Cheslyn Hay High School
Saredon Road
Cheslyn Hay
Walsall
West Midlands
WS6 7JQ

Dear Mr Martin

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during the visit I made on 06-07 February 2007 to look at work in history. This was primarily in relation to the pilot GCSE course in Year 10, although wider aspects of the work of the department were examined.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our national evaluation and reporting. Published reports are likely to list the names of the contributing institutions, but individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is broadly good. Standards are well above average overall.

- In 2006, 81% of students achieved grades A*-C at GCSE. This is well above the national average and a slight improvement over the 2005 results. Numbers opting for history at GCSE are high. Standards of those students in Year 10 who have opted for the pilot GCSE course reflect the lower ability range of these students and are just below average.
- In teacher assessments in 2006, 79% of students achieved a Level 5 or above. This is above national expectations and broadly mirrors the number of students in the school who achieved Level 5 or above in the Key Stage 3 tests in English.

- There has been no formal assessment of students' work in the pilot course to date as students have just completed their first piece of course work. Most students are making good progress in relation to their starting points, and have gained reasonable levels of knowledge and understanding of the topics studied. An analysis of several pieces of coursework shows that the students are capable of writing carefully structured work, although their skills in source analysis are much less well-developed.
- Students in Key Stage 3, as well as those on the one year intensive GCSE course or the two year traditional course, are making good progress in relation to their starting points.
- The students on the pilot GCSE course are enthusiastic about their studies and are keen to learn. They say, for example, that they are enjoying the unit of work on the Anglo Saxons because it is different from anything they have previously studied. There are good relationships between students and there is a good rapport between staff and students. Behaviour is generally good and attitudes are constructive. These all combine to create a good climate for learning.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning in history is good overall.

- Only one lesson in the pilot GCSE course was seen during the visit and therefore it is not possible to make an overall judgement on the teaching in this course. The students, however, say they value the quality of the teaching which is interesting and challenging.
- A range of interesting and effective tasks is being used in all history lessons to help students become more involved in their own learning.
- A good attempt is made in lessons to structure learning so that students are clear about what they are going to learn and why.
- The department has taken appropriate steps to accommodate the assessment demands of the new course and is becoming increasingly aware of what needs to be undertaken. This work is in its early stages of development.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- In the pilot GCSE course there is a clear attempt to construct an appropriate scheme of work which students find interesting and relevant. The unit on the history of the Olympic Games, for example, recognises the school's specialist sports status as well as the relevance of the significance of sport in history in the run-up to 2012. The knowledge and understanding which are required by students are identified but planning for progression in the skills to be addressed is not sufficiently explicit.
- The department has begun to consider the coherence of the different elements of the pilot in relation to continuity both from Key Stage 3 to

Key Stage 4 and within Key Stage 4 itself. It has not yet fully developed or articulated, though, how these key elements will interrelate to create a coherent course for the students.

- The pilot GCSE course is enjoyed by the students and is developing independent thinking and research skills.

Leadership and management of history

The leadership and management of history in the school overall are good although the pilot GCSE, understandably, is still subject to development.

- The department has analysed accurately the needs of the students at Key Stage 4. The pilot GCSE course is targeted primarily at below average students who may perceive it as being more relevant than the traditional GCSE.
- The department has taken appropriate steps to develop the course within the context of the early stages of a pilot GCSE course and within the level of support provided by the awarding body.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is good.

- The analysis of the results of different groups of students, especially at Key Stage 4, is a positive feature of the departmental approach to inclusion.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the remaining two units of the pilot course
- identifying more explicitly how the pilot's schemes of work address progression in skills and continuity from Key Stage 3
- making clear to students how the different elements of the pilot are brought together to produce a coherent course.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Lynn Bappa
Additional Inspector