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Mrs J Warne
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Dear Mrs Warne

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with Clive Barnett on 15 November 2006 to look at work in history.

The visit focussed on history but inevitably, given the nature of your integrated curriculum, it was difficult to separate history issues from the wider context.

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 are published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform our judgements included your school self-evaluation, interviews with staff, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons. All our judgements agreed with your own self-evaluation.

The overall effectiveness of history was judged to be very good with outstanding features.

Achievement and standards in history

- Standards are well below average. All students have severe or profound learning difficulties and disabilities.
- Students' progress is very good. Students achieve well or very well in relation to their targets. There is no significant difference across key stages or between groups of learners.

- The school monitors students' progress carefully allowing fast and effective intervention to take place if they are failing to meet expected targets.
- Teachers know well how students are doing in aspects of the curriculum which have a historical dimension. When the history is part of work in English and other core subjects, this work is formally assessed and cumulative records kept. However, the school lacks a simple record of students' progress in history.
- The work students undertake in history contributes well to their personal development. The school rates personal development as outstanding and inspectors agree. One described as 'stunning' the way in which young people flourish.

Quality of teaching and learning in history

- The quality of teaching and learning is very good with some which is outstanding.
- Teachers know their students well; they know what students can achieve and they respond expertly to day-to-day changes in mood and behaviour. As indicated above, they monitor students' progress very well.
- Teachers plan lessons well to cater for the different needs of students; teaching assistants provide very valuable support.
- Students enjoy their lessons and they often have lots of fun.
- The commitment of *all* staff to the students is impressive.

Quality of curriculum in history

- The quality of the curriculum is very good. Work in the subject is successfully integrated with other subjects to provide an historical dimension where appropriate.
- Because the curriculum is adjusted to suit the needs of individual students, the precise nature of the history covered varies between students. This is wholly appropriate.
- The National Curriculum in history is used as a starting point for what is taught but it is interpreted appropriately so as to meet the needs of different students. There is an excellent focus on skills that will help students in the future.
- The school considers that although it is doing well in its development of a personalised curriculum and teaching method adjusted to meet needs, there is still scope for further development. Inspectors agree.

Leadership and management of history

- The quality of leadership and management of the subject is outstanding. This judgement applies to all levels of management.

- Managers know the school well. The quality of the school's monitoring and self-evaluation including its evaluation of the quality of history is very good.
- Guidance for teachers in history policy documents and elsewhere is very clear. Managers encourage the intelligent interpretation of the scheme of work to ensure a curriculum that is appropriate for students.
- Particularly impressive is the way in which the school involves everyone in management decisions about provision for students. This includes staff, parents and the students themselves. In consequence, the history curriculum and its teaching and learning are well matched to students' needs.

Subject issue - literacy

- Because of the integrated nature of the curriculum, history contributes well to literacy and other subjects.

Inclusion

- The school's business is inclusion. All students are well supported to achieve as well as they can and take their place in society when they leave school. Other cultures are celebrated and there are no reports of racism. The policy not to exclude students for misdemeanours is impressive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing a more formalised record of students' progress in history
- developing, further, teaching, learning and a curriculum adjusted to the needs of students.

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

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

Paul Armitage
Her Majesty's Inspector