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Mr S Maddern
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Dear Mr Maddern

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: history

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 18 and 19 October 2010 to look at work in history.

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 without their consent.

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

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- Students' progress has improved significantly in Key Stage 4 and all groups achieve well. Attainment in GCSE examinations is broadly average, although relatively few students attain the highest grades.
- Progress in Key Stage 3 has also improved, although it remains satisfactory overall.
- In the majority of lessons observed, students made good gains in developing their historical knowledge and understanding.
- Students show a firm commitment to the importance of studying history. They value the perspective that it provides on the contemporary world and the skills and understanding it develops. Students understand that there can be disagreements over the significance of events and developments in

the past and have a firm grasp of the importance of evaluating historical sources carefully, considering their utility and reliability.

- History makes a good contribution to students' personal development. They enjoy the subject and respond well to the varied activities provided.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers plan well to develop students' knowledge and understanding effectively, both within individual lessons and in sequences of sessions.
- Students appreciate the attention given to ensuring that lessons involve their active participation, for example through sequencing and sorting approaches.
- In the lessons observed, students were required to think carefully, often making judgements about the significance of events and considering issues of right and wrong. Occasionally, teachers' questions generated limited responses and they missed opportunities to press students to think further.
- Well-planned assessment opportunities across the curriculum provide good information on what students have done well and where they need to improve. Students also reflect on their own progress and, in discussion, students were confident that they knew what to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been reviewed appropriately in the light of changes to the National Curriculum and provides a good range of activities to develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding. The 'I learn' approach in Year 7 provides good opportunities for work in some depth, particularly on aspects of local history.
- In Year 9, the new BTEC Public Services pathway for students of broadly average attainment involves historical studies in units at various points. Those occurring later in the year, not yet planned in detail, offer considerable scope for historical study and it is important that students' entitlement to the National Curriculum is met and that teachers are well placed to assess the level students reach in history by the end of Year 9.
- In Key Stage 4, the curriculum is planned carefully to meet the requirements of the GCSE course and to ensure that students continue to benefit from a wide range of engaging activities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

The effectiveness of the leadership and management in history is good.

- The subject coordinator is a strong advocate for the subject. He works effectively with the two other specialist teachers, with opportunities for all to lead on different parts of the Key Stage 3 curriculum.
- The activities of the coordinator and the well-developed college self-evaluation procedures have given a clear and accurate view of the strengths and areas for development.
- Data are used well to monitor students' progress in Key Stage 4 but they are not yet used sufficiently systematically to provide information on students' progress towards their targets for the end of Key Stage 3. Information on the progress of pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities is good but the progress made by other groups is not routinely analysed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving progress in Key Stage 3 by monitoring students' progress more systematically, including that made by different groups, and identifying possible underachievement early so that additional support or challenge might be provided
- ensuring that those on the BTEC pathway in Year 9 receive their entitlement to the National Curriculum history and that arrangements are in place to support teachers' assessments at the end of the year.

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

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Grahame Sherfield
Her Majesty's Inspector