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Mr Evans
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Evans

Ofsted survey inspection programme – History

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during the visit I made with Christine Inkster AI on 18 and 19 September 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. 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 satisfactory. Standards in history are broadly average.

- Standards in history at GCSE are rising, although the attainment of boys remains below average.
- Students make satisfactory progress. This represents significant improvement compared to recent years and it is continuing to improve. For example, students have become increasingly skilful at evaluating sources and at producing focused answers for examinations.
- Students behave well. They demonstrate positive attitudes to work and to other students and staff. Their social and cultural development is good.

Quality of teaching and learning of history

The quality of teaching and learning in history is good.

- Teachers plan their lessons well. There is a good variety of engaging activities. Some are targeted carefully to raise boys' achievement, and this is improving outcomes for students.
- Teachers take care to develop students' literacy and social skills alongside their historical knowledge, skills and understanding. Students are encouraged to reflect on their own learning.
- Students' work is marked regularly, although the quality of comments varies.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The scheme of work is being adapted to raise achievement. In particular, the department is providing an additional GCSE course as part of its strategy to raise boys' achievement.
- The department's lead status within the Humanities College has enriched its curriculum. In particular, there are strong community links and opportunities for students to participate in national events. There is a strong emphasis on students' local heritage as well as significant national and international events, such as Holocaust Day.
- The rich curriculum contributes to students' enjoyment of history and is reflected in the high number of students who study history at Key Stage 4.

Leadership and management of history

Leadership and management of history are good.

- There is good leadership of teaching and learning. This includes the promotion of consistent planning across the department to improve provision.
- Strong teamwork is a characteristic of the department. There is much collaborative work which benefits students.
- History has a high profile within and beyond the school, and enjoys a reputation for good provision and improving outcomes for students. High quality displays in classrooms and around the school are lively and engaging.
- The department is aware of its strengths and weaknesses. It acknowledges that its use of data is being addressed but needs further development.

Inclusion

The provision for inclusion is satisfactory.

- The department recognises that boys are still under-achieving at Key Stage 4 and, as noted above, are adopting a range of strategies to tackle this. The department is well-supported by whole school strategies to tackle this marked local pattern of achievement.
- The department has recognised that it needs to make some of its enrichment activities more inclusive, notably key visits linked to the curriculum.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the quality and use of assessment, including data on students' progress
- clarifying the rationale for progression and coherence in the curriculum.

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

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

Heather Richardson
Her Majesty's Inspector