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Mr M Best
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Dear Mr Best

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 13 and 14 September 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of history is good.

Achievement in history

Achievement in history is good.

- All groups of students make good progress in Key Stages 3 and 4 and attainment in GCSE examinations is above average.
- In the majority of lessons observed, students made good gains in developing their knowledge and understanding.
- In the sixth form, student numbers are small and attainment varies from year to year. Students make consistently good progress from their starting points.
- Students have a firm grasp of the value of history in helping them to understand aspects of the contemporary world. They have a good understanding of the nature of historical sources and the importance of

evaluating their utility and reliability in constructing accounts of events and developments in the past.

- History makes a good contribution to students' personal development. They enjoy the subject, have positive attitudes and are keen to contribute their ideas. Behaviour is very good. Students sustain concentration well and work collaboratively to good effect.

Quality of teaching in history

The quality of teaching in history is good.

- Teachers adopt interesting and engaging teaching approaches to which students respond well.
- Teachers' good subject knowledge is used well to help students make links with their previous learning and with the contemporary world where appropriate.
- Lessons observed had a sharp focus on how students might improve their previous work and on the use of appropriate vocabulary. Occasionally, the pace of learning slowed as the teacher allowed more time than was required for a particular activity.
- The marking of students' work on examination courses is good, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers' marking in Key Stage 3 does not provide such clear guidance for students on how to improve.
- Assessment opportunities have been developed in Key Stage 3 to provide students with detailed information about their progress. However, these have not yet been organised into an agreed scheme with established marking guidance, supported by a collection of moderated work to help teachers in carrying out assessment.

Quality of the curriculum in history

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum contributes strongly to students' firm grasp of the value of history in helping them to understand aspects of the contemporary world.
- At Key Stage 3, the curriculum is broad, balanced and meets statutory requirements. It provides a wide range of opportunities to develop students' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The themes and issues underpinning Key Stage 3 are not coherently set out and planning for progression in historical concepts and skills, including approaches to independent enquiry, is not yet fully developed.
- At Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form, the programmes of study are designed carefully to meet examination requirements.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in history

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

- The head of department is a committed advocate for the subject and its place in students' understanding of the world around them. He works closely with the other teacher of history.
- Self-evaluation is realistic and accurate and there are appropriate priorities and plans for improvement.
- Close work with two other teachers in the school's 'trio' approach to professional development, visits to other schools, and the training provided by examinations boards contribute strongly to providing suitable opportunities for professional development in this small rural school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing planning for Key Stage 3 to set out clearly the themes and issues studied in Years 7 to 9 and to identify progression in historical skills and understanding more clearly, including approaches to independent enquiry
- establishing an agreed pattern of opportunities for assessment in Key Stage 3, supported by a developing collection of moderated samples of students' work.

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

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