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Mr B Elliott  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Elliott

### **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 1 and 2 December 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.

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

The overall effectiveness of history is outstanding.

### **Achievement in history**

Achievement in history is outstanding.

- Students make outstanding progress and all groups achieve exceptionally well. Attainment in GCSE examinations has been consistently well above average for several years with an impressive increase in the proportion of students obtaining A\* and A grades.
- In lessons observed, students made very good gains in developing their historical knowledge and understanding.
- Students have very well-developed skills in evaluating historical sources, including their reliability and utility, and a growing understanding of how interpretations of the past may change in the light of new evidence or current events. They have a firm grasp of the importance of history in

building understanding of the contemporary world and in developing skills and understanding that will be useful in many different spheres in later life.

- History makes an excellent contribution to students' personal development. They enjoy the subject very much, value the support from their teachers highly and respond very well to the wide variety of activities provided in the classroom and beyond. Students speak very positively of opportunities to share ideas with classmates and learn from each other.

### **Quality of teaching in history**

The quality of teaching in history is outstanding.

- Teachers' excellent subject knowledge is deployed very well to focus students' learning on important questions about the past.
- Lessons are planned skilfully to build historical understanding systematically and students value the wide range of activities included.
- In the lessons observed, teachers' expectations were high and students were pressed to think for themselves. Very good opportunities were provided for students to consider how they could improve and develop their work. Some challenging sources were used very well to build understanding, for example 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century cartoons to develop a firm grasp of the reasons why some people opposed vaccination.
- Teachers' assessment of students' work is of high quality. It is based on well-planned opportunities to assess understanding in some depth and on regular marking that helps students to recognise what they have achieved and what they need to work on to improve. Students also reflect on their own work and identify for themselves where they need to focus their attention.

### **Quality of the curriculum in history**

The quality of the curriculum in history is good.

- The curriculum has been designed carefully to meet the needs of the students, and provides good opportunities for them to explore their local heritage as well as to look beyond west Cornwall.
- Good links exist with other subjects such as English and art, and a wide range of activities enriches the curriculum and involves visits locally and much further afield, as well as visitors to the school.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been considered carefully and identifies themes and issues addressed in Years 7 to 9. However, not all the modules have yet been documented in detail to allow the department to gain a clear overview to confirm, for example, progression in key skills and understanding.

## **Effectiveness of leadership and management in history**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in history is outstanding.

- There is a clear commitment to, and passion for, the subject which is shared by the head of department and his colleague who work together closely for the continuing improvement of the provision.
- The deep dedication in history to improving standards of work so that students achieve as well as they can is widely recognised and as a result history is the most popular option subject in the school.
- Realistic and accurate self-evaluation, supported by the school's effective procedures for departmental review, lead to clear and appropriate priorities for ongoing improvement.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- completing the detailed planning for Key Stage 3 to permit checks on key features of the curriculum in Years 7 to 9.

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 sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

**Grahame Sherfield**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**