



Historical Association Quality Mark Final Report

Visit to: **Castle Mead Academy**

Date: **26th June 2024**

Introduction

Castle Mead Academy is an average sized 11-16 secondary free school in Leicester catering for around 1000 scholars (the term used for students at Castle Mead). The school is part of the Mead Educational Trust. The school population is diverse and welcomes scholars from over 50 feeder primary schools in the local area. Around 35% of scholars are Pupil Premium, with the current Yr7 cohort numbers at 50%. Scholars currently on the SEND register make up around 19% of the school population, including those with EHCPs. The latest Ofsted report for the school was in November 2023 and was graded as 'outstanding' which included a deep dive in History.

Evidence for the assessment was gathered through a selection of pupil voice discussions from Years 8-10, learning walks across several KS3 classes, a tour, book looks, and separate meetings with the subject leader and teaching staff within the department. A separate online meeting took place with the headteacher shortly after the visit. Further evidence was also provided by the subject leader in the form of a comprehensive portfolio and other requested paperwork on the day.

1.) Teaching and Learning

Lesson walks by the assessor, and evidence in the portfolio from internal observations and external reports, clearly shows that teaching in History is consistently outstanding. During the visit the assessor observed two lessons in key stage 3 in which one was a post assessment evaluation of what the scholars had recently completed. In the Year 8 class the teacher skilfully used questions to elicit answers from scholars about questions in the assessment, before demonstrating good practice through modelled answers so the scholars could improve their answers. All the scholars were engaged in the lesson, and some told the assessor how the feedback helps them improve on their assessments for next time.

Similarly, in a Year 9 class the scholars were engaged when studying sources about life on a plantation. They fed back on how they enjoy reading historian accounts and studying sources to facilitate debates about each topic they study.

The department has worked hard with introducing oracy techniques into most lessons including getting scholars to complete oral debate homework's to use in class, being a Talk 21(EEF) school and providing extended reading for homework. It is important that the new oracy techniques are extended to all classes which the department intends to do in the next academic year. Teachers use a wide range of strategies that are linked to clear objectives that have a real impact on the knowledge and understanding of all scholars in History. Staff deliver lessons following the Castle Mead Teaching and Learning policy of 'invigorating instruction' – lessons characterised by rigour, depth, drive and clarity of purpose. During the learning walk it was clear how consistent the delivery of content in lessons were for each class, ensuring all scholars have

a rich diet of History across the department. This is further enhanced by the departments detailed scripting of lessons which provides exceptional guidance for any staff member leading the lesson to deliver consistent content.

The school draws from a wide range of resources to deliver an innovative curriculum for its scholars. There is a keen drive by members of the department to support independent practice, including 'Meanwhile, elsewhere...' projects whereby scholars can submit pieces of work that stretches their learning beyond the curriculum. Moreover, in lessons, scholars read and respond to historical scholarship to develop their own questions during each enquiry in key stage 3 and 4. An example of this is in Year 8 during the Transatlantic Slave Trade enquiry where they read and respond to the works of Professor David Olusoga, James H Sweet and the local historian Shirley Aucott. This model of 'Story, Sources, Scholarship' was developed through extensive research, including articles from the Historical Association.

Most scholars see the value and purpose in what they do, and there are high levels of motivation amongst the scholars about the History provision at Castle Mead. During the assessors visit he discussed with several scholars their thoughts about History in the school and their responses showed a maturity and awareness about the purpose of History including how they regularly learned about human stories through sources, the importance of local History to their own identity, and spoke about debating interpretations through each of the enquires they had studied.

Scholars engage with high quality marking and feedback that enables them to move forward in their own learning in History. At the beginning of the academic year, scholars are introduced to the purpose and process of how feedback helps their learning, with the teachers using up to date research and practice to talk through how it is done in History. After an assessed piece of work, scholars spend a lesson making improvements to their work in green pen, discussing the questions as a class, so they are clear about how to move their learning forward. Moreover, detailed next steps are written by teachers to assist the process and ensure scholars are given individual and precise 'feed forward' comments.

The evidence suggests that teaching and learning is at Gold standard.

Next Steps:

1. Continue to embed oracy techniques across all classes and monitor the effectiveness of these.

2.) Leadership

The school regards CPD for teachers and leaders as important and imperative to enable the History department to be forward thinking and innovative. The department leader is the co-chair of the Trust Leadership History group and often contributes resources, ideas and research with other department leads. Furthermore, the department leader is an active member of the local HA branch and has shared resources and CPD with the wider History community.

The department uses meetings to talk through the latest research, and the school ensures the department has 'away days' where the Subject Improvement Plan is discussed alongside updates on topics and themes around the History curriculum. The department leader was also able to gain funding so all staff in the department had a personal copy of the latest History book 'What is History Teaching, Now?'.
There is a shared understanding and commitment to the consistent systems in place across the History department at Castle Mead School. Performance Management observation records show that the department uses cycles of monitoring in the academic year to observe teaching and set development targets linked to personal and departmental goals. Furthermore, the Subject Improvement Plan is linked directly to the school's targets, and the head of department provides highly effective strategic leadership welcoming external reviews from Ben Walsh, talking at conferences, and working with other departments on creating an effective curriculum. History was also chosen by the headteacher to be a deep dive subject in the recent Ofsted inspection.

The department also has excellent systems for supporting staff, and for succession planning for new staff joining the school. Due to the comprehensive action plan, and detailed schemes of learning, all staff spoken to on the day told the assessor how they value the support and challenge from the department leader, and how the feedback and resources enable them to concentrate less on planning, but more on their pedagogy.

History enjoys a high status in the school and is seen as an innovative and forward-thinking department. The assessor spoke to the headteacher who reiterated how the department has led in curriculum design and implementation as a relatively new school, and that often History has been seen as a beacon of good practice both for other internal departments, and also across the wider multi-academy trust. Similarly, parental feedback is actively sought through a variety of forums. Evidence in the portfolio from 'book polishing' discussions between parents/carers and scholars shows positive reflections on History in terms of engagement and enjoyment of topics. History Learning Postcards also show this by encouraging scholars to talk to their parents/carers about the topic they are currently learning about in school, which the department then collects these back and evaluates the comments to build into the departments own review.

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3.) Curriculum

The History curriculum at Castle Mead School is highly innovative, engaging and well-constructed. There is a clear vision for the subject reflected in the design of the KS3 curriculum which is underpinned by 4 key questions that scholars regularly return to: How were people rule

during this period, how did people live during this period, what did people believe during this period and how do we know about this period?

A broad range of enquiry approaches are used to develop scholars' depth of knowledge as well as their independent research skills. Enquiry questions have been skilfully crafted throughout the curriculum to weave in substantive and disciplinary knowledge such as in Yr7 with 'Is John D Clare right to perpetuate the belief that Medieval Life was "nasty, brutal and short"?' , and in Yr9 'With what evidence can we challenge Hugh Trevor-Roper's assertion that "Africa had no history prior to European exploration and colonisation"?'

There is a good range of chronological periods, geographical scales, areas and perspectives of history within the planned curriculum. In KS3 scholars study a broadly chronological set of topics with the medieval period in Yr7 through to the Holocaust in Yr9. An external review by Ben Walsh, and discussions with the department on the day, highlighted how Yr7 topics could be reviewed to include less 'medieval heavy' content by introducing a more diverse topic. The department has already been exploring potentially studying 'Baghdad' which would feed well into other topics and themes that run through the curriculum. The KS4 scholars study topics from Edexcel including the Cold War, China and a Thematic Study of Migration which the department has linked well to earlier studies in the KS3 curriculum so scholars can make links to previous learning.

History enjoys a good time allocation across the curriculum with 2 hours a week for KS3, and 3 hours a week for KS4 (including one double lesson). Local History is weaved throughout the curriculum at Castle Mead, including specific units in KS3 about life in industrial Leicester, and the effect of WWII on the city. In KS4 units' evidence of the global and national impact on Leicester is often highlighted through significant individuals and the cultural impact of migration on the city.

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Next Steps –

- 1) Continue to explore replacing a Yr7 Enquiry with a more diverse topic.

4.) Achievement

There are clear and precise progression documents linked to GCSE outcomes that run through key stage 3. Each scholar has an assessment folder which tracks their progress through the school in History and clearly shows progress in terms of key aspects of historical knowledge including working with sources and scholarship, and knowledge application. Moreover, each of the termly assessments have a section dedicated to knowledge retrieval which includes questions from the current topic, year and previous learning in key stage 3. Ofsted feedback of assessment in History also concluded that teachers 'routinely check what pupils know before moving on with new work'.

Tracking is regular and comprehensive across History with scholars assessed against summative assessments and attitudes to learning. Interventions are quickly highlighted for scholars working below their expected level, and teachers adapt their planning to ensure those falling behind have targeted work to improve and consolidate their knowledge.

While this will be the first year the school will have national examination results to analyse, the history department tracking of scholars is robust due to the precise nature of the progression document which has mapped the Edexcel exam board criterion, so teachers are able to assess accurately against statements of expectations such as 'indicative of a Grade 5 prediction'. In Year 11, teachers have identified scholars who are working below their expected level and put into place a comprehensive catch-up programme as an intervention that runs through the weekly school timetable.

Current Yr11 data shows that the cohort will achieve 63% overall for grades 9-5 which is above the national average, with disadvantaged scholars and those with SEND either around or near to the national average. In Years 9 and 10 the majority of pupils are making expected or more than expected progress towards their predicted GCSE grade.

Achievement in History is regularly celebrated across the department and school. Teachers can nominate scholars for badges and certificates in History which are then awarded to scholars at assemblies. 'Excellent Work' displays are also evident in History classrooms showing off the work of scholars and are frequently updated.

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Next Steps –

- 1) Evaluate the results of the Year 11 cohort to analyse trends in achievement for next year's action plan.

5.) Enrichment

History at Castle Mead Academy effectively contributes to an enrichment programme that operates beyond the school curriculum and has a positive impact on the wider community. Over the past two years the scholars have experienced a Heritage Day in Year 9, a WWI History trail with elements of English, Geography and History. Many of these events were run in conjunction with other schools in the local area. Furthermore, History clubs, Archaeology clubs, Family History and a History of Music club have been prominent features of the whole school Castle Character Time which take place twice a week and is part of the whole school extended timetable.

There are a wealth of History displays around the school which highlight the enthusiasm for History through scholars extended homework projects covering different topics to the curriculum, whole curriculum timelines with school topics and world events in each classroom, local history photographs and map displays of key historical events and their locations around the world.

History enjoys a separate identity on the school website including a detailed description of the research behind the curriculum, the intent, implementation and impact and key stage overviews for visitors and parents/carers to access. Moreover, there are links for scholars and parents/carers to websites and publications for a range of topics in the key stage 3 and 4 curriculums. The department also sends out regular communications to parents about upcoming

topics and assessments with advice for supporting their scholar, and images of enrichment activities that have taken place in the academic year.

History actively contributes to cross-curricular learning in several different ways. One example is through English where elements of the Crucible and Salem Witch Trails are compared to public perception around the 'red scare'. History also plays a key role in the whole school Reading for Pleasure policy by offering books and selected texts for scholars to access.

Local History and community links are a key aspect of the departments drive to learning outside of the classroom. The school is a recognised Heritage School from Historic England, and staff and scholars' experiences are regularly shared through their forums. Similarly, the school has frequent links with the local community who come into school and give speeches and presentations to scholars. One example of this was Peter Barrat's presentation about his Great Granny Alice which the year 9 scholars engaged with suffragette postcards and images to enrich their historical knowledge of the period.

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Final Comments:

The History provision at Castle Mead Academy is innovative, forward thinking and engaging for all stakeholders. It was a pleasure to visit the school and witness the wonderful History learning taking place in the lessons All staff, scholars and parents/carers should be incredibly proud of the work they are doing with History, and I would like to thank them for making my visit so welcoming.

Award made: **Gold**

Date of Award:

26/06/24

Renewal Date

26/06/27