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### Meaningful history for all: Lampton School Academy

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#### Brief description

By putting inclusion at the heart of its approach to teaching and learning, history reflects students' needs and their context. It responds to their aspirations and it prepares them for their future as citizens in a diverse multi-cultural, multi-faith and multi-ethnic society. As a result, history is relevant. Yet it is also engaging and enjoyable, accessible and challenging.

#### Overview – the school's message

'History has benefited from unique contributions made by current and former subject leaders and staff, which have been integral to the department's position of strength today. We have always sought to appoint history teachers with a passion for history, plus a steely determination to ensure that history enhances the learning and lives of all students in our school. It is this passion which lies at the heart of the journey of improvement. The school uses both data and student voice to guide the evaluation of our work - and the history department is at the forefront of this work. We also rely heavily on the informed professionalism of our subject leaders and trust their judgement with respect to curriculum development. As a leadership team we seek to develop "great" subject leaders and teachers through our maxim "collaborate or die", supporting departments and individuals to forge links with higher education, subject associations and other schools. This flexibility has to be carefully managed but the dividends from such collaboration can be seen in this case study.'

*Sue John, Headteacher*

#### The good practice in detail

History at this school is both successful and popular. Achievement is outstanding. Increasing numbers of students choose to study the subject at both GCSE and A level and it is the largest optional GCSE subject. This positive and flourishing picture has evolved over a number of years and in the face of considerable challenges. Lampton has more than 40



feeder primary schools, over 80% of the students are from minority ethnic groups, and the proportion whose first language is not English is well above that found nationally. At the last inspection in May 2008, the school was judged to be outstanding overall and at the latest subject inspection for history in February 2010, the provision was judged to be outstanding in all the key areas.

The department is determined that students have a meaningful experience when studying history. This has led them, in the words of Esther Arnott, the Head of History, 'to put inclusion at the heart of everything we do. Making history meaningful for all students means thinking about inclusion from every angle. It is much more than differentiated worksheets in a lesson.'

For the history teachers, making history meaningful has a number of strands. It is about providing an experience that reflects the needs of the students and their context and prepares students for their future as informed citizens. And students confirm that history is meaningful. 'I find history interesting and I want to find out more because it makes me think', said one. Another commented that studying history, 'helps me to understand how the past relates to me and the world around me'.

**Five strategies** come together to explain how the history department has successfully put inclusion at the heart of its work and, as a consequence, has enabled the subject to thrive and to be so highly regarded by students of all ages, abilities and ethnic backgrounds.

## 1. A distinctive and innovative curriculum

At [Key Stage 3](#) the curriculum fully meets the requirements of the National Curriculum programmes of study. However, it has been constructed so that it also meets students' needs and aspirations and reflects the context in which they live. For example, approximately 40% of the students are from Indian heritage. As a result, students in Year 8 undertake a comparative study of the most important turning points in life in Gurgaon, India, and Hounslow from the mid-sixteenth to the mid-nineteenth centuries. In addition, at the end of this key stage in Year 9, students have the opportunity to undertake an independent project entitled, 'What have you always wanted to study?'

This work is supplemented by an enrichment programme which is comprehensive and which involves all students in all year groups. It includes visits to museums and places of historical interest, some local and some further afield. Visitors regularly come into school to talk to groups of students. These activities generate vibrancy and students comment about how much they enjoy and value the visits. One student's comments sum up the view of many when he noted that visits 'brought history alive'. The department has also been proactive in making effective links and connections with external bodies. For example, Hampton Court and Richmond Museum have both put on programmes which were tailored to suit the school's requirements.

The department offers three courses at GCSE; a Modern World course, the History Pilot course and an entry level course. There are no entry requirements to study history at Key Stage 4. As a result, history is for all because the department, in the words of Esther Arnott, 'takes all-comers'. There is a similar open-access policy in the sixth form and, so long as a student has at least a Grade C in English Language, all that is required is a commitment to study history.

## 2. Imaginative and sensitive teaching

Lessons are planned with a range of activities which engage students, make them think and challenge them to question, investigate, hypothesise, and review. Yet lessons are also accessible for all students. Resources and activities are differentiated to meet individual needs. Teachers recognise that differentiation is much more than different worksheets for different levels of ability. In the words of Alex Leggett, an associate assistant headteacher and a history teacher, 'Differentiation involves scaffolding so that all students can grasp difficult ideas and concepts. It is not about simplifying ideas.' Students understand this and it makes the subject more attractive to them. As one student says, 'history is challenging but I understand what I'm supposed to do and my teacher helps and encourages me.'



The department is highly effective at making practice explicit; what Jacqui Smith, the associate headteacher and also a history teacher, refers to as 'de-privatising practice'. This involves teachers questioning their own and other teachers' practice, learning about best practice from colleagues and subsequently changing what they do to improve both teaching and learning. Differentiated lesson plans and resources are shared and stored on the electronic Central Resource Library, so that teachers are able to benefit from each other's work and suggestions. Teachers also take responsibility for writing complete schemes of work, which are taught and reviewed by the whole team. Students recognise that they are well taught in history. 'It's intellectually challenging but in a good way', says one. Others agreed and add that the teachers, 'let you work things out...you all get a say...and, there's never a dull moment.'

Teaching is particularly successful because it emphasises the importance of meaningful experiences for all by placing the development of historical thinking, analysis and evaluation at the heart of the lesson. Teachers personalise their lessons to meet the needs of groups of students and provide bespoke learning opportunities which allow individuals to make outstanding progress. In one Year 11 lesson, for example, students were working on improving an answer to an examination question. Under the broad direction of the teacher, brighter students were analysing what made a high-quality answer and subsequently advising other students on how they might improve their work. Students appreciate that teaching is adapted to meet their needs and this helps to explain the excellent relationships between adults and students; relationships characterised by mutual respect. Additional work is always available, increasingly via the school's virtual learning environment which students can access from home. As one student commented, 'There's never an end of the line. There's always something extra so you have plenty to think about.'

## 3. Incisive leadership and management

Leadership and management of history are of the highest quality. The head of department provides clarity of vision and of purpose. Documentation is comprehensive. Schemes of work are thorough and regularly updated. Self-evaluation is forensic. All staff are involved in discussions and decisions and they know that their views are respected and influential. Action plans are pertinent, focused on what will improve provision and outcomes in history, and are closely monitored. Students are regularly surveyed and their views inform future plans and developments. Department meetings focus solely on pedagogy and students.

Examination results are closely analysed by examination course and by teaching group according to, for example, gender, ethnicity, EAL and gifted and talented. Current performance of all students is similarly analysed so that underachievement can be swiftly identified and bespoke approaches put in place to support those students who need it.

Robust monitoring and an unequivocal acceptance by all teachers of their own accountability ensure that providing high-quality engaging history lessons is of paramount importance. Staff achieve this on a regular basis, as testified by lesson observations by the head of department and team members and by the student survey responses. In 2011, for example, students praised history lessons because they involved opportunities for active learning and characterised them as challenging, clear, interesting, thoughtful, and well structured.

#### 4. Committed and reflective teachers

Teaching is outstanding because of the quality of the workforce. Students benefit from the enthusiasm and experience of a group of committed and reflective teachers who strive for excellence and to ensure that history is accessible to all students. The department is a diverse group of individuals who between them have over 50 years of teaching experience in the school. This experience is shared willingly with each other to the advantage of the students and of each other. Four members of the senior leadership team teach history but the head of history is responsive to their commitments and has welded a cohesive and established team.

This stability is strengthened by a broad range of support staff from across the school and by external partners. Support is carefully targeted to make a difference to those students who need it. As a result, learning support assistants and a cover teacher are linked to the humanities faculty so the same individuals support most history lessons. Colleagues from the speech and language centre provide specific assistance as needed. They are consulted by teachers as they plan their lessons to ensure that the resources and tasks to be used are accessible by all students and especially those for whom English is an additional language. All these adults are included in the department's planning; they are encouraged to engage with teachers about the lessons, and they are aware of what the department is trying to achieve. The same is true of former students who, along with trainee teachers, volunteer to become full and equal members of the history team.



Students realise this and appreciate it. In the 2011 students' survey, for example, 98% of students agreed with the statement, 'They know me well and expect the most of me'.

Teachers are always prepared to try something new. In one Year 10 lesson, for example, David Barnes, head of GCSE history, had produced alternative lyrics to Queen's song *Bohemian Rhapsody*. The new lyrics focused on a step-by-step guide about how to answer specific questions in their examinations. The students were immediately engaged and recognised that this was a technique which they could adapt to create their own revision reminders. This creative approach rubs off on the students. As one said, 'I have fun in my lessons because it's ok to take risks and experiment with how I think.'

## 5. Access to consistent high-quality professional development

There is an instinctive awareness of the importance of consistent high-quality continuing professional development, not least because history teachers are promoted quickly. As a result, the department focuses on using their skills and experiences to build capacity in teaching and learning. Furthermore, a range of training opportunities is always available to teachers. Opportunities involve professional development courses to enhance the knowledge, understanding and skills of current history teachers, in-service training by the department across the school, and substantial outreach work at a local, regional and national level. The importance of this work is that by keeping teachers up-to-date about current initiatives and developments, practice in the classroom in supporting students in their learning is enhanced. For example, all teachers of examination classes have recent experience of examining at either GCSE or A level. Three members of the department are currently undertaking further degrees. Attendance on courses is encouraged and lessons learned are passed on to the rest of the department.

In service training by history teachers across the school is another aspect of the commitment to professional development. In the words of Jacqui Smith, it is about 'harnessing teachers' passions to the benefit of all'. History teachers run effective and popular twilight training courses for other staff on, for example, how to develop critical thinking, the use of ICT for personalised learning, and how to make the best use of interactive whiteboards.

Outside school, strong and effective links with a range of partners ensure that the needs of students are met and that there are no gaps in provision. Long-standing links between the history department and Roehampton University help to give teachers not just a theoretical underpinning of what they do but also an opportunity to critically reflect on how they approach their teaching. Such is the high level of expertise at Lampton that the history department delivers annual training to all secondary history trainees at Roehampton on how to approach the teaching of history for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, for students with English as an additional language, and for students who are identified as gifted and talented. This work is highly regarded not only by the trainees themselves but also by the history staff, because it requires them to regularly reconsider their own practice and to think about how they can improve the ways in which they make history meaningful for all students.

This outreach work is enhanced, for example, by links with a neighbouring maintained school and an independent school. Work with the maintained school has focused on passing on good practice about how to engage difficult students in lessons. Work with the independent school has focused on seeking out additional strategies about how to engage more able students. The head of history is committed to supporting the professional development work of the Historical Association and the department has been instrumental in forming the [London History Network](#) which now has 85 members from across 17 London Boroughs and beyond. Such in-depth professional development at a range of levels not only helps the department to spread and to glean good practice but also to avoid stagnation and potential insularity.

The last words, though, should go to Esther Arnott. 'We see inclusion as an issue that is bigger than the history team and bigger than the school. We are committed to sharing our philosophy and practice with others, supporting colleagues so they feel able to offer an inclusive experience in their own departments. For us meaningful history can be provided for all students by being inclusive in all we do. It's desirable, it's possible and it brings great results.'

## The school's background

[Lampton School Academy](#) is a comprehensive school for students aged 11 to 19 serving Hounslow. Approximately 80% of the students are from minority ethnic groups. The proportion whose first language is not English is well above that found nationally. The proportion of students eligible for free school meals is high. The proportion of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities is in line with the national average although the proportion with statements of special educational need is significantly above national levels. The school is a National Support School with a main specialism in humanities. In addition to this, it holds Training School and Leading Edge status and is part of the London Challenge programme. The school is accredited with the Investors in People Award, Artsmark Silver, International Silver Award, Eco School and Healthy School status.

Are you thinking of putting these ideas into practice; or already doing something similar that could help other providers; or just interested? We'd welcome your views and ideas. Get in touch [here](#).

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