



Working towards quality...

An exciting opportunity for you and your school

Bev Forrest

Three years ago I was asked to join a working party for the Historical Association (HA) to devise a set of standards to identify the quality of provision for history teaching in primary and secondary schools. Successfully meeting these standards would result in schools gaining official recognition for the quality of learning and teaching within the subject in their school. As a former history co-ordinator in a primary school I empathise with those teachers seeking a way to showcase the exciting things happening in their school which often go unrecognised and unrewarded. Of course we can't get away from achievement being measured by pupils achieving high standards in maths and English but as we know quality is much more diverse and we should recognise achievement of all pupils in all areas. With this in mind I was delighted to accept the challenge. I joined a diverse team of experts covering the whole spectrum of history education in schools, intent on developing a scheme which was manageable and achievable for all types of school. Once a framework was drawn up we invited schools to become part of the pilot project agreeing to share their journey in gaining the award to enable us to make any necessary modifications before the scheme went public. Autumn 2014 was an exciting time for us with the first schools ready for assessment. I was delighted to be part of the team awarding the first primary Gold Quality Mark to Knowsley Junior School, near Oldham. Following some changes recommended by the pilot schools and assessment team we are now ready for you to join us on this exciting journey of recognition for history within your school.

What is the Quality Mark?

The criteria for quality cover six key areas:

- Learning and teaching
- Leadership
- Curriculum
- Achievement
- Enrichment

and a further section which enables you to celebrate any of the outstanding work you do which is not covered by the other five sections.

Each section contains a number of different areas of focus (see Figure 1). These all have a descriptor to outline what your school would be doing to meet that criterion at either Gold or Silver award level.

Once you have signed up for the award you have 12 months to undertake a self-audit and construct a portfolio of evidence. When you feel you are ready you will request a visit from an assessor. Prior to the visit the assessor will review your portfolio and together you will plan what you would like to include on your assessor's half-day visit. You will formally receive the outcome of your submission within seven days along with your assessor's full report.

What are the benefits of achieving the Quality Mark?

After reading the previous section you are now probably thinking, That sounds like an awful lot of work for the co-ordinator and their colleagues, so why bother? Successful schools from the pilot have been universal in their praise of the scheme. They all highlighted that while receiving the actual award was very empowering they felt the key benefit was

Figure 1: The six focus areas related to Area 2 – Leadership

- 2.1 Status of history
- 2.2 Organisation and management
- 2.3 Self-evaluation and monitoring
- 2.4 Support of staff
- 2.5 CPD programme
- 2.6 Views of parents and media

undertaking the process itself. One team spoke about how 'The process allowed us time to reflect on provision. We completed a rigorous self-evaluation of history throughout the school.' Another co-ordinator who had wanted to make changes for some time found that going for the QM was the, 'impetus needed to make improvements'. Many found that embarking on the QM often facilitated being given some extra time to work with other staff. A result of this was one found it resulted in 'thinking about the subject across the school, rather than just our own class'. Many welcomed the opportunity to work with the assessor and gain access the expert guidance provided. This collaboration is very powerful, as one subject leader found: 'Some things we thought we were doing well actually needed development.' There is no denying that they all saw the process as challenging and, yes, it does take some time to complete but they spoke about how it left them feeling inspired and it was seen as a valuable

Figure 2 The area of Leadership relating to CPD illustrating the difference between a Gold and Silver award

2.5 CPD Programme:

How does the school ensure effective CPD in history? What impact does an effective CPD programme in history have on learning and teaching?

Silver: The history co-ordinator is a member of the Historical Association and has a record of history CPD.

Gold: The school is a member of the Historical Association and history CPD maintains a high profile in the school. History CPD is clearly matched to needs identified through self-evaluation. Evidence shows that CPD undertaken has made an impact in learning and teaching. The school shares resources, ideas and good practice with the wider history community including partner schools and the local community or by contributing to networks or conferences.

professional development exercise. Achieving the award was certainly a highlight for them all and one which they were quick to share with parents and the wider community thus enhancing the profile of the school and the subject. They all felt that they had now set a standard which they would work to maintain.

Isn't this just like an inspection?

The process of compiling evidence and undergoing scrutiny may seem a like an inspection; but we can assure you that the Quality Mark assessment is very different. We firmly believe the process of achieving the Quality Mark is very much two-way. Remember you are given the power to select the material you want the assessor to scrutinise. In particular there is the opportunity to celebrate those things you do really well which may be unique to your school. Unlike an inspection you decide when you are ready for the assessor to visit. Prior to the visit the team at the HA will scrutinise your portfolio and decide if it is in your interests for the visit to proceed. They may also ask you to provide further evidence in some areas to strengthen your application. This means that when the assessor does arrive the HA thinks you stand a very good chance of having an award granted. This knowledge should take some of the pressure off you on the day. Also while working towards the award there are many opportunities built in for you to discuss your progress with the team at the HA. You could even opt for an additional visit by the assessor to support you in preparing for the final assessment. The pilot schools all commented on how supportive the assessors were and, yes, they did smile!

What happens on the day?

Half a day, actually! Once you make the request for a visit your assessor will be in touch to plan the day. Each visit will be different dependent on the nature of the school and the evidence already presented in the portfolio. There are some common elements such as providing opportunities for the assessor to meet one or more members of the senior management team (SMT). This meeting will enable them to get even more of a feel of the way history is viewed within your school. The assessor will want to see some history being taught and if possible by different teachers and with a variety of age groups. It is to be hoped that they will have time during the lessons to discuss the subject with some pupils. If this is not possible, however, time should be allocated to meet pupils. Above all the assessor will want time to talk to the subject co-ordinator and to take a further look at the evidence portfolio. The HA knows how important it is for your school to receive some feedback on the day, so all being well they will be able to share their recommendations. This outcome is provisional and will require verification from the broader assessment team. Within seven seven days you will receive a comprehensive report which is a valuable tool in

enabling you to take history even further in your school, particularly if you achieve Silver and are now keen to go for Gold.

What is the difference between Gold and Silver award?

When you register for the Quality Mark you will need to decide if you would like to go for a Gold or Silver award. This is not cumulative and you may decide that the quality of the subject is already high and you are ready for Gold at the outset. Each area of the standards has separate Gold and Silver descriptors. Figure 2 shows the area of Leadership relating to CPD and gives you an idea of the difference between a Gold and Silver award. Once you gain an award whether for Silver or Gold it is recognised for three years and then you will need to re-apply. If you achieve Silver and want to go for Gold at a later stage the process is simpler as a great deal of the work has already been done.

What does a piece of evidence look like?

For each section of an area you will need to provide two pieces of evidence within your portfolio. You can use the same pieces of evidence for more than one section. The kind of evidence you provide is very much dependent on the area, but the HA is very open to a diverse range of material to showcase your school: curriculum overviews, schemes of work, policy documents, lesson plans and examples of pupils' work are all standard forms of evidence. Think about the things you do really well. For example you may want to celebrate the excellent links you have with the community and your portfolio could contain annotated newspaper clippings or photographs of events. The inclusion of such items as action plans and agendas and minutes of meetings would be valuable evidence to show the progression over the year. Figure 3 gives you some ideas for the sort of evidence you could include. The possibilities are endless and don't worry because if the assessors find that more evidence is needed they will ask. As well as the evidence from the portfolio of course there is also all the evidence the assessor will gather during their visit. Once you have registered for the scheme you will have full access to the portfolios compiled by pilot schools so you can view the evidence they provided. There is also a handy list of examples of evidence which you could use as a reference tool. The completed portfolio stays with you and pilot schools have been quick to point out how useful the completed profile is as a training and moderation tool to use within school, particularly at a time when we are unsure how we measure quality performance by our pupils.

Ready to go for the award?

A first step is to look at the Quality Mark materials available on the Historical Association website. Please

keep in mind that this evidence is from our pilot schools and we have already acted on their advice to simplify the process for you. If you are a class teacher with an interest in history then share this article with the subject co-ordinator and offer your support in helping them to achieve the award for the school. If you are the co-ordinator then arrange to meet the Head and seek their support in making the application. It is important that the co-ordinator has the support of the SMT and their colleagues as this is an award for the school not just for the co-ordinator. One thing to keep in mind is that while you may not be ready for the award when you register, it's where you are in 12 months that's important! That's why going for the award is such a powerful tool in raising the quality of provision for the subject within your school. We hope you feel enthused and empowered to join the HA on this exciting journey to ensure high-quality provision for history teaching in all our primary schools. The last word has to go to Liz Oliver, the history subject co-ordinator at Knowsley Junior School, the first primary school to be awarded a Gold Quality Mark.

This has been an opportunity for our junior school ... to show how we excel in teaching history and how we want to spread this in our area and support other schools. It was ten months of hard work and focus but the reward of the Gold certificate and the smiles on the children's faces made every minute worthwhile. We have shown that foundation subjects can underpin learning across the curriculum. Thank you HA for the opportunity.

Where to find more information:

www.history.org.uk/resources/primary_resources_284.html

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Figure 3: Types of evidence you may use in your portfolio

- **Curriculum overview**
- **Schemes of work**
- **Lesson resources**
- **Samples of marked work**
- **Annotated photographs of wall displays**
- **Annotated photographs of school events/ theme days/assemblies or visits**
- **Screen shots or links to pages on school websites.**
- **Scanned samples of pupil/parent surveys**
- **Typed or podcasted interviews with pupils**
- **School policy documents relating to history and the criteria in question**
- **Subject action plans**
- **Improvement plans**
- **Samples of trackers**
- **INSET certificates or proof of attendance/completion**
- **Meeting agendas and/or overviews**
- **CPD programmes**
- **Scanned newspaper clippings**
- **Scanned pupil peer review and/or end of topic reviews**