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Ms J Farr
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Farr

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 29 and 30 September 2010 to look at work in citizenship.

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 learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons and two assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is outstanding.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are good with some outstanding features.

- Students have a good understanding of most key concepts within the curriculum. They are particularly strong on rights and responsibilities, identity and diversity and the features of democratic government.
- Good opportunities for extended writing are provided across the curriculum. Students respond with work of an excellent quality, exploring causes, effects and consequences for individuals and society and the potential for personal or collective actions to bring about change. However, opportunities are fewer for extended writing within the discrete provision.

- Students' behaviour and attitudes to learning are exemplary. Respectful, supportive relationships across the school promote full and frank discussion of issues. Students demonstrate excellent ability to reflect on and evaluate a wide range of issues at a local, national and global level.
- The opportunities for active citizenship across the school and beyond are outstanding. A large number of students eagerly take up responsibilities to lead the work of others. For example, the work of the school's worship leaders, peer mentors, community and sports leaders is impressive. Beyond school, students enjoy working extensively with primary schools, supporting disabled adults and are keen to support others through charitable events. Students are prepared to make personal sacrifices in order to make a difference, such as cutting off their hair to support a charitable event providing wigs for cancer sufferers.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is outstanding.

- The work in citizenship is suitably challenging and stretches students of all abilities. Across the curriculum, teachers demonstrate clear understanding of citizenship learning and the commitment to deliver this through their specialist subjects. They use good subject knowledge to engage their classes with topical examples to illustrate key concepts.
- Teachers deal with sensitive and controversial issues well, encouraging open and frank discussions with confidence. Dialogue in lessons is of an excellent quality.
- A variety of active approaches are used including role-play, discussion work and imaginative use of interactive whiteboard technology. Teaching is planned carefully to help develop critical skills and students' ability to make informed judgements.
- Assessment procedures are established and developing well. Teachers check on students' understanding through a variety of means systematically and intervene if further clarification is required. Exemplary assessment was observed in RE where students were peer-assessing with clarity and maturity. Their articulate comments indicated their clear grasp of the relevant issues and an excellent understanding of how to improve their written responses.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is outstanding.

- The combination of discrete and cross-curricular provision provides memorable experiences for high-quality learning in citizenship. The curriculum is planned in some detail, informed by current initiatives and is responsive to local, national and global issues.
- The exploration of local issues and links forged with the wider community provide a range of excellent learning experiences within and beyond the

school. For example, the Year 8 History project helps students to grasp the impact of various events on the community at that time and the impact today. The current Shakespeare project is successfully enhancing Year 7 students' understanding of the issues of fairness, justice and discrimination as raised in Romeo and Juliet and the relevance of these issues in today's society. Students particularly appreciate opportunities to explore other cultures through the well-established links with schools in Tanzania.

- Considerable enrichment of the citizenship curriculum is gained through the school's specialist performing arts status. In particular, the exploration of concepts and issues through role play in drama strongly reinforces students' empathy and understanding of key aspects of citizenship.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are outstanding.

- A clear, underpinning vision and support for the subject are evident from you and your senior team. Citizenship learning has a distinct and prominent profile in the life and work of the school. Impressively, a number of senior leaders are able to explain the vision for the subject, its importance to the school's ethos and atmosphere and the value of active engagement of students. This supports the prominence of the subject, which clearly makes an excellent contribution to the promotion of community cohesion.
- Senior leaders' support for the subject is excellent. For example, the vertical grouping of students, the school's strongly inclusive approach, a good level of resourcing and the clear commitment made to succession planning in subject leadership. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are thorough and suitably focused on improving provision and raising achievement. However, the current audit of provision across the curriculum lacks detail of the processes that students are working through in exploring the key concepts.
- Subject leaders are determined with a clear sense of purpose. Both former and newly appointed subject leaders demonstrate impressive energy and commitment. They understand well the strengths and areas for improvement and have clear plans for the future development of the subject. Overall, there is excellent capacity for further improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the auditing of cross-curricular provision takes account of the processes being used across the curriculum
- disseminating the best practice evident across the school.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop citizenship 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

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector