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17 November 2010

Ms D Rumley
Principal
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Dear Ms Rumley

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 3 and 4 November 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 four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are good.

- Assessment data show over 80% of GCSE students working at Level C or above and 86% of Year 8 students at or above Level 5. Those students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and students with English as an additional language achieve well in citizenship.
- Students demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of key aspects of citizenship, especially of human rights, aspects of law and of diversity in the UK.
- Students demonstrate good skills in enquiring about citizenship issues and presenting their findings. GCSE controlled assignments show students' good achievement in a range of interesting contexts.

- Students' books and files demonstrate good achievement. However, in recording information for the GCSE, a wider range of note making styles might be considered.
- Students consider the qualities of effective advocacy and campaigning, selecting issues, researching, planning and evaluating. Work in the 'Youth and Philanthropy' module of Year 8 and in GCSE controlled assignments are particularly good features, showing citizenship in action in the academy and the local community.
- More broadly, students have very good opportunities to participate in the academy and beyond in a range of roles, including school councillors and mentors. Particularly impressive is the work of student commissioners on aspects of academy improvement, including learning and care.
- In lessons and interviews, students demonstrated enjoyment of citizenship, especially when discussing and exploring topical issues. The high number of students opting for citizenship GCSE is testament to this.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Four lessons were seen, three of which were good and one outstanding. Lessons were planned thoroughly with a range of learning activities to make the most of the time available.
- Lessons were characterised by good relationships, rapid pace and well-understood classroom procedures. All lessons included phases of individual, group and whole-class work.
- Materials were selected well to interest and engage all students. In one lesson, for example, the focus on the media's treatment of a celebrity engaged students in exploring issues of equality. Teachers showed willingness and confidence in engaging with topical and sensitive issues. Good use is made of information and communication technology.
- On occasion, however, teacher-led questioning went on for rather too long.
- Very good use is made of outside expertise, for example, practising lawyers trained to teach agreed units of the course.
- The quality of assessment is very high. Marking is painstaking and assessments are based on thoughtful use of the National Curriculum and GCSE grade descriptors as well as skills-based learning objectives. Students understand and value the assessment process. Comprehensive intervention strategies, including communication with parents, are in place to support students, particularly the small proportion identified as underperforming.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good.

- The citizenship curriculum covers the National Curriculum programmes of study in Key Stages 3 and 4, consisting of the emerging humanities course in Year 7, discrete teaching in Year 8, and an option of a full GCSE from Year 9. A good, evolving scheme of work underpins both humanities and citizenship.
- Other important components include the preparation for adult life days, assemblies and extra-curricular activities including citizenship clubs.
- Opportunities to participate in a range of contexts, not the least in the role of student commissioners are good; participation is rewarded through awards and in reports to parents.
- The academy as a whole has considered the implications of 'responsible citizenship' as an overarching curriculum objective.
- Links with partners to augment the curriculum are outstanding, including 'Lawyers in Schools', the police and through participation in the academy's ambitious mentoring scheme.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are outstanding.

- The academy has a strong vision for citizenship that has been put into practice with a series of major initiatives in the curriculum and staffing.
- The academy has evaluated developments carefully and planned accordingly. 'Student voice' is used very effectively. The school evaluation form gives an accurate view of the quality of provision, although it could be more explicit in explaining the selected grades.
- The subject leader is very well supported within the humanities department and by senior leaders.
- The subject leader's role has been discharged very effectively in developing a scheme of work and associated resources. Very good links have been made internally and externally to enhance citizenship provision.
- The academy has outstanding capacity to improve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening teaching about the central areas of government and politics in a module of the Year 7 humanities programme, as planned
- broadening the range of ways in which GCSE students record information in their files
- considering how teachers might model expected outcomes of key tasks to ensure that they maximise learning opportunities.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop citizenship in the academy.

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.

Yours sincerely

Scott Harrison
Additional Inspector