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Mr N Walker
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Dear Mr Walker

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 9 and 10 December 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good with outstanding features.

Achievement in citizenship

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

- Students demonstrate a keen knowledge of current and topical affairs. They convey a good understanding of the background to national and international issues from the successful inclusion of citizenship themes across the whole school curriculum.
- All students undertake the GCSE citizenship course resulting in high attainment. In 2009/10, 93.1% of students achieved a C grade or above which compares very favourably with national figures.

- Students engage readily in their assessed citizenship education projects, often generating their own topic ideas. This willingness sharpens their research skills.
- The standard of students' written work is high. Outstanding examples included written work within which students presented critical, engaging and well-researched arguments on ageism and on the role of the media.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- GCSE citizenship is taught by a small group of teachers drawn from across a range of subjects including classics, music and art. Their particular subject expertise is used well to strengthen aspects of citizenship teaching, for example using pop culture as means of exploring 'Britishness'. This brings a richness and relevance to the subject and results in positive outcomes for students. However, the lack of specific subject training for the team presents some limits in the depth of their specialist subject knowledge and understanding.
- In the best examples, teachers encourage students to formulate their own opinions and consider why conflicting views emerge. They use citizenship-specific terminology well to reinforce learning. The quality of marking is generally good. In the best instances, teachers use marking to help students achieve or exceed their predicted levels but also use it to prompt students to consider the implications of their views. This is particularly important where students are tackling controversial issues such as crime and punishment and asylum.
- Regular and accurate GCSE course assessment takes place and students know what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good.

- The citizenship curriculum is broad and over-arching. It encompasses a cross-curricular approach, enrichment and the GCSE, which all students undertake. Citizenship-related activities feature well in the sixth form. In total, this diverse approach adds up to a well-considered curriculum, a view supported by students.
- There is a good sense of continuity and progression. Within UCAS applications for example, some students articulated the benefits they accrued in their active engagement in voluntary community work. They referred not only to their involvement but also to what they learnt from the experiences.
- Themed assemblies address many social and political issues which resonate well with citizenship; for example, community, diversity, tolerance and human rights. The work undertaken through the school's 'International School Award' enhances learning.

- A recently introduced co-located special school has created valuable learning opportunities and curricular links. This has a direct impact on students, enabling them to understand more about disability and equality.
- Although many subjects support the core citizenship curriculum, citizenship objectives have not been mapped sufficiently across key linked subjects.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are outstanding.

- Senior managers have a very clearly articulated ethos and have ensured a well considered place for citizenship. This encourages students to value others' views.
- A common school theme of individual 'rights and responsibilities' provides students with clear terms of reference, both individually and collectively. The school has created good opportunities for progression in citizenship as students move through the school.
- Leaders and managers routinely monitor teaching and learning. They are alert to the need for continuous improvement. The school development plan rightly notes that the delivery of citizenship education is due for review.
- Senior managers support and resource citizenship education very well. However, sufficient opportunities have not yet been created to develop the expertise of the small citizenship core team.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the expertise of the core citizenship team
- mapping citizenship objectives more broadly across the curriculum.

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

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector