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Mr B Monaghan  
Headteacher  
Saint John Houghton Catholic School  
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Dear Mr Monaghan

### **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 22 and 23 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of student-led meetings and presentations; and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good.

### **Achievement in citizenship**

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are good.

- Students have a good understanding of most key areas of the curriculum. They are particularly strong in human rights, environmental issues and the criminal justice system. They have a sound grasp of the role of the media, voting and elections; they are less well informed about the role of Parliament, local councils and the allocation of public finances.
- The citizenship programme makes a good contribution to students' personal, social, moral and cultural development. They enjoy citizenship, see it as relevant to their lives and engage actively with the learning. Those involved in the many citizenship groups and societies have good opportunities to influence change within and beyond the school. In

lessons, teachers encourage students to express themselves and justify their opinions.

### **Quality of teaching in citizenship**

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Most of the work in citizenship is suitably challenging. Students with special educational needs are supported in lessons; gifted and talented students often take the opportunity to further their interest by becoming involved in active citizenship. Teachers deal with sensitive and controversial issues well. Those with good subject knowledge engage their classes with topical examples to illustrate key concepts. Where teachers lack subject expertise, they are not always able to explore issues in sufficient depth.
- Teachers use a variety of active approaches including role-play and imaginative use of interactive whiteboard technology. Teaching is planned to help develop students' critical skills and their ability to make informed judgements. Many lessons conclude with a decision-making exercise linked to personal action for change.
- Teachers understand how well their students are doing in lessons through questioning. However, there is little scrutiny of students' work and they are not given feedback on how to improve. Assessments are beginning to take place in Key Stage 3 but this is at a very early stage; learning in citizenship at Key Stage 4 is not assessed.

### **Quality of the curriculum in citizenship**

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is informed by current initiatives and is responsive to local, national and international issues. Good links are forged with the wider community to provide a range of learning experiences within and beyond the school. Students particularly appreciate opportunities to learn about other cultures through the Street Child Africa project where they communicate with teachers and students in Zambia, and the International Schools initiative which links students with other schools locally and in Dubai.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities do not have the benefit of alternative arrangements to access the citizenship curriculum. Their needs are met through classroom assistance rather than through alternative provision.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship**

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- You and the senior leaders are supportive of and well informed about current developments in citizenship. Subject reviews and self-evaluation

are suitably focused on raising standards and improving provision. The vision for citizenship links well to the school's mission statement and makes a strong contribution to promoting community cohesion.

- Leaders and managers are able to inspire confidence and commitment in staff and students. They understand well the strengths and weaknesses in the subject. However, improvement planning lacks rigour and strategies to meet targets are unclear.

**Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- embedding effective assessment strategies
- ensuring rigour in departmental action-planning.

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

**Janet Palmer**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**