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Miss S Sherwood  
Headteacher  
The Dormston School  
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Dear Miss Sherwood

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 6 and 7 April 2011 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 eight lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good with outstanding features.

### **Achievement in citizenship**

Achievement in citizenship is good with outstanding features.

- At Key Stage 3, students have a secure understanding of citizenship concepts. By Key Stage 4, students' knowledge and understanding are strengthened through a solid curriculum and consistently good teaching. Students of all ages demonstrate excellent ability to reflect on and evaluate a range of citizenship issues. They talk confidently about the importance and value of discussions in forming their views and can identify where opinions have changed in the light of these discussions.
- Students talk confidently about sensitive issues and are not hesitant in expressing their views. In particular, they feel that it is important that their school lives up to the values and attitudes that it encourages through citizenship learning; for example, in tackling racist or discriminatory attitudes robustly and promoting equality across the school.

- The use of the student voice is a strength of the school's work. The revised school council reinforces the concept of democracy and representation and includes students of all abilities and aptitudes. There is good impact from the council's work; the current anti-bullying campaign is influencing values and attitudes and promoting understanding across the school. The school seeks students' views through a range of useful strategies, including learning walks with students and regular 'health checks' that canvas their views on teaching and learning. Consequently, students feel that they have a significant voice in their school. In addition to council roles, the school provides a range of other useful volunteering opportunities to encourage students to lead activities.

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

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- The teaching observed was consistently good, illustrating a number of strengths. Very positive relationships are evident, which result in a positive atmosphere for learning. Key Stage 4 citizenship teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge with clarity about the importance of students' forming opinions and sharing their views. Students appreciate this willingness to encourage discussion; they comment that this is the most enjoyable aspect of the subject.
- Lessons are well planned; they proceed at pace and make good use of the time available. Effective use is made of a variety of suitable resources, including media clips, images and articles. Information and communication technology is used well consistently to enhance learning.
- Discrete citizenship lessons at Key Stage 3 were not observed; the school's own monitoring suggests that practice here is variable, ranging from satisfactory to good. The school recognises the need to develop consistency of approach across the tutor team delivering these lessons.

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

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is good.

- At Key Stage 3, the curriculum model is complex with discrete provision through Life Skills reinforced by cross-curricular dimensions. It has been carefully audited in Year 7. Some solid citizenship elements are evident; for example, the unit on the environment in Year 7 and the units on democracy and diversity in the Year 9 programme. Overall, the provision is sound, although closer mapping of the separate components in Years 8 and 9 would provide a fuller picture. Provision at Key Stage 4 is stronger, through specialist teaching, providing a very secure basis for students' knowledge and understanding of the key concepts. The subsequent impact on students' knowledge and skills is good.
- The formal curriculum is reinforced well through the morning preparation sessions and the assembly programme, both of which contain strong citizenship components.

- The wider curriculum contributes well to citizenship learning with teachers demonstrating good commitment to this. Examples were observed in English, RE, geography and drama where citizenship objectives were realised effectively. Occasionally, the citizenship learning was not fully realised in the haste to move on in the 'host' subject but overall, good contributions were made to students' learning.
- Good links with other agencies and the wider community add significantly to provision. An increasing number of visits are made, including a Year 10 visit to Westminster following a visit from a local MP. Links with local bodies including the local council, together with international links with Washington, support the citizenship programme well.

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

Leadership and management in citizenship are outstanding.

- The status and significance of the subject have been strengthened and improved in recent years. Good support has been secured from a range of colleagues, many of whom contribute well to citizenship learning.
- Excellent commitment to citizenship is evident at a senior level. This is seen in the time allocated for the subject, a good level of resourcing and strong support for citizenship-related activities across the wider life of the school. Students' involvement in a range of activities strongly supports active citizenship.
- The subject leader is confident and enthusiastic about her role; she works very effectively with colleagues to support the development of citizenship learning. Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and takes careful account of students' views. Improvement plans are appropriate and creative; for example, suitable curriculum developments are being considered to meet the needs of lower ability students.
- The links with community cohesion are very clearly identified: an excellent community involvement and engagement plan has been implemented as a result. The work of the school through the Dormston Centre, in association with a range of community partners, to support wider community learning, break down barriers and promote positive attitudes is exemplary.

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

- mapping the provision across Key Stage 3 more fully in order to support coordinated approaches
- securing greater consistency in teaching at Key Stage 3, introducing specialist teaching whenever possible
- exploring how citizenship days might enrich and reinforce the current provision.

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**