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Ms C Jones
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Jones

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 15 and 16 June 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; and observation of seven lessons in whole or part, and other activities including an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is outstanding.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is outstanding.

- Standards attained in the GCSE by the 2010 Year 10 cohort were outstanding, with 70% gaining grade C or above.
- The achievement of current Year 10 students on GCSE and AS citizenship courses is very high and progress is rapid, as demonstrated in lessons and in their written work. Progress and achievement in Key Stage 3 are good. All groups of students progress well.
- Students with special educational needs and/ or disabilities made good progress and attained above projected levels in the GCSE.

- Most students enjoy citizenship and work with enthusiasm and determination, responding well to the challenges presented.
- Students' practical political understanding is outstanding and they work as active citizens in a range of ways, both in citizenship lessons and through the broader life of the school. Students elected to the student cabinet expressed their pride in the fact that the students' voice is influential in matters including the curriculum and the newly introduced house system.
- Students develop mostly good knowledge of citizenship contexts through enquiry and are able to formulate and argue their own views on a range of issues. Knowledge of some aspects of the citizenship programme of study, including human rights and the law, are very strong.
- Students, including sixth formers, meet very well the expectation that they take responsibility as part of school life and through contributions to the wider community. All students take part in activities, such as the Youth Philanthropy Initiative, and participate in work at a local to global level, including links with a school in Tobago.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is outstanding.

- All lessons observed were good or outstanding. They were characterised by meticulous planning of enjoyable learning activities, good pace, very good relationships, high expectations and excellent use of information and communication technology.
- Lessons were well sequenced to give students opportunities for individual, paired and whole class work. Teachers used differentiation in group activities very effectively and their good questioning tested students' understanding at a range of levels.
- Teachers are very well aware of students' prior attainment and the assessment of written work is rigorous, often with helpful comment on next steps for improvement.
- Students with special educational needs and/ or disabilities were well supported to enable them to make good progress.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is good.

- The citizenship, personal, social health and enterprise education programme in Key Stage 3 provides a good core in the concepts and processes of National Curriculum citizenship. It is stronger on aspects of rights, responsibilities and law than government and politics.
- Students take citizenship half-course GCSE or at AS level in Key Stage 4 and these underpin their strong progress.
- This core citizenship curriculum is very well augmented by other subjects, such as geography and drama, as well as other aspects of the work of the

school including community-cohesion time, the school councils and student cabinet, assemblies and the use of visitors to the school. Specific activities in citizenship are planned to complement school and national events, such as elections and national campaigns.

- Curriculum planning is generally good but the identification of learning objectives and outcomes sometimes lacks clarity, with links made to National Curriculum levels that are not always sustainable in practice.
- The sixth form curriculum provides an entitlement to citizenship through the tutorial programme and useful activities such as peer-mentoring.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is outstanding.

- There is a very strong vision for citizenship in the school, expressed in your determination to 'encourage students to develop individual and social responsibility and to actively participate in local, national and international community issues with integrity and confidence'. Students know that they are expected to contribute to school life at all levels. This includes policy formulation, with students having a voice on issues through their representatives and student surveys.
- Citizenship is very well managed, with very perceptive and accurate self-evaluation based on a comprehensive programme of monitoring and data analysis. Development planning is strong, linked to whole-school priorities. Key policies, such as one on teaching sensitive and controversial issues, are included in the departmental handbook. Schemes of work are thorough and evolving in the light of review.
- Citizenship is well staffed and resourced and there have been good opportunities for coaching and for training, for example in assessment for learning and GCSE examination requirements.
- The whole school commitment to citizenship education in its broadest sense reflects the high priority given to it in the school.
- There is a very strong link between citizenship and community cohesion.
- There is very good capacity for continued improvement.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening the Key Stage 3 programme of teaching relating to key features of parliamentary democracy and government in United Kingdom
- reviewing the approach taken in schemes of work and lesson planning to identification of learning objectives and outcomes and their relationship to National Curriculum attainment levels.

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

Scott Harrison
Additional Inspector