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Mr D Iddon  
Headteacher  
Bishop Vesey's Grammar School  
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Dear Mr Iddon

### **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 13 and 14 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 12 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is outstanding.

### **Achievement in citizenship**

Achievement in citizenship is outstanding.

- Students actively participate in lessons; they express themselves with confidence, exploring ideas and concepts together and actively challenging different viewpoints in a constructive manner. They are very comfortable and confident in seeking clarifications from each other and from teachers.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship concepts are secure in both Key Stages 3 and 4. Sixth form students are particularly strong, demonstrating an excellent understanding of democracy, rights and responsibilities, identity and diversity through their roles in school as for example, leaders, officers and mentors. Students are able to evaluate the role of citizenship in shaping decisions and influencing systems to help them draw sensible conclusions. They use this knowledge and

understanding of democracy by holding, for example, mock elections and by electing students to a range of committees within the school and the local community.

- Achievement at Key Stages 3 and 4 is consistently good and outstanding in the sixth form. By the end of Year 11, students understand the value and significance of campaigning to make a difference, enhanced by their own campaigns as part of their assessed work.
- Attitudes to the subject are very positive. Students build up very good background knowledge as they progress through the school and recognise the part that citizenship plays in their learning and everyday life. They demonstrate very good understanding of politics, democracy, rights and responsibilities and international affairs. Students find the subject content relevant and value the extensive opportunities to discuss current affairs and topical events through the range of subjects, including the school's personal, social and health education programme.
- The quality of students' extended writing is very good and illustrates their depth of knowledge and skills of enquiry.

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

The quality of teaching in citizenship is outstanding.

- Teachers develop students' skills in enquiry and research very well across all subjects.
- The work provided is suitably challenging for students at all levels. Across the curriculum, teachers demonstrate clear understanding of citizenship learning and the commitment to deliver this through their specialist subjects. They incorporate relevant citizenship lines of enquiry into their lesson planning. However, some teachers do not always make these explicit in their teaching. In the outstanding lessons, teachers use good subject knowledge to engage their classes with topical examples to illustrate key concepts. In a high proportion of lessons observed, teachers had a clear and accurate view of how the citizenship elements could enhance the lesson. For example, in a Year 10 design technology lesson, students discussed the implications of packaging and package design on sustainability. Students revisited their work on sustainability from Year 9 and debated at length about the '4 R's', namely reduce, reuse, recycle and renew and the implications of packaging and package design on the environment.
- Teachers are highly skilled in dealing with sensitive and controversial issues, encouraging open and frank discussions with confidence to help develop students' critical skills and their ability to make informed choices. Dialogue in lessons is of an outstanding quality. Students are not daunted by debating controversial issues. On the contrary, they enjoy the challenge and respect differences of opinions. As one student commented, 'It's fun challenging others' views and being challenged. You learn more'.
- Teachers use a range of approaches which actively engages students in role play, discussion and debate. Teachers consistently use interactive

whiteboard technology imaginatively to engage students' interest and make learning enjoyable.

- Assessment procedures are well established. Teachers check on students' knowledge and understanding through a variety of means and intervene if further clarification is required.

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

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is outstanding.

- The cross-curricular provision provides memorable experiences for high-quality learning in citizenship. This is exemplified by the department's vision for students to develop their knowledge and understanding of the world and become informed citizens. This reinforces the whole-school vision in developing relationships which offer interpersonal care, fostering self-development for the benefit of others, establishing openness in relations within a community that values individuality and corporate responsibility.
- The school's excellent work on community cohesion is closely linked with citizenship. This relationship ensures students' exploration of local, national and global issues across the curriculum. It is enhanced further through the impressive list of extra-curricular and enrichment opportunities offered to all students. The school's specialist language status also offers all students the opportunity to travel to a number of countries at least once while they are at Bishop Vesey's, further enriching their knowledge of cultural and linguistic diversity. Students particularly appreciate opportunities to explore other cultures through well-established links with their international school partners, for example, with schools in Gambia, Tanzania and India.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is outstanding.

- A clear underpinning vision and support for the subject are evident from you and your senior leadership team. Citizenship learning has a distinct and prominent profile in the life and work of the school. Impressively, a number of students, particularly those from the sixth form are able to explain the vision for their school, its importance to the school's ethos and the value of active engagement. This supports the prominence of the subject, which clearly makes an excellent contribution to the promotion of community cohesion.
- The school's strongly inclusive approach, good level of resourcing and the clear commitment made to the recent succession planning in subject leadership demonstrate strong commitment to the subject. Monitoring and evaluation procedures are robust and suitably focused on improving provision and raising achievement even further, particularly at Key Stage 4.

- Subject leadership is determined with a clear sense of purpose. Both former and newly appointed subject leaders demonstrate energy and commitment. They understand well the strengths and areas for improvement and have clear plans for future developments. They recognise that some teachers could make citizenship dimensions more explicit in their lessons. Overall, there is excellent capacity for further improvement.

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

- supporting teachers to make citizenship more explicit through their specialist subjects.

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

**Rashida Sharif**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**