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Mr S Cowdry
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cowdry

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 4 and 5 July 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, students and the school-based police officer; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of two lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is satisfactory.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is satisfactory.

- The progress of those students taking GCSE citizenship is good. Students demonstrate good understanding, particularly of justice and the law. As part of their GCSE assignments, they have studied the work of campaigning organisations and they have taken part as active citizens in campaigns such as raising awareness of the work of a charity.
- Students in Key Stage 3 show good understanding of rights and responsibilities, the law as it affects young people and aspects of the diversity of the United Kingdom. However, their political understanding is weaker, reflecting the current curriculum.
- Students on the school council understand how their election mirrors democratic processes and can demonstrate the impact of their work on

the life of the school, including their contribution to the cashless system now used in the canteen and the school behaviour policy. Students interviewed provided very good role models in terms of their willingness and ability to take responsible action.

- Students interviewed and those observed in lessons generally showed enjoyment of citizenship, citing its relevance and their interest in discussion and debate of topical issues. In lessons, students were keen to offer their views, but sometimes without listening with respect to those of others.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Only two lessons were observed and in both of these students' mostly good progress was linked to the quality of teaching. Other evidence, including students' books and interviews with students, supports the judgement that teaching is good.
- Lessons started somewhat slowly with the writing out of learning objectives, but the pace quickened rapidly. The lessons were well planned with a range of different and interesting activities that made students think.
- Good relationships were maintained with students and this promoted satisfactory behaviour and reasonably well-sustained levels of concentration on the part of the very great majority of students. The newly introduced system of sanctions was applied in the rare case where a student misbehaved.
- In a Year 7 lesson, the progress of some lower attaining pupils and some with English as an additional language was particularly strong because of the close support they received.
- The assessment of citizenship is very good. Learning objectives are clear. Marking is frequent and detailed, giving students praise for what they have done well and providing realistic targets for improvement. Progress is tracked through assessments linked to National Curriculum levels. GCSE assessment is very well informed by the experience of examining in public examinations.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is satisfactory.

- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is well planned on paper for Years 7 and 8. However, an important unit on 'power' was omitted from the current Year 8 programme and this in turn limited the overall achievement of students in terms of the breadth and depth of their knowledge and understanding.
- The curriculum is strong in terms of rights, responsibilities and the law, augmented in Year 7 by a day of activity in workshops, activities led by the school-based police officer and debates on gangs and crime.

- In Key Stage 4, GCSE citizenship has increased in popularity in the last two years, but it remains an option taken up by a minority of students, around one third of the cohort. While there are links to citizenship in other subjects and aspects of the life and work of the school, this means that other students do not receive an identifiable citizenship programme.
- The process of electing the school council and its representative function give students an understanding of aspects of citizenship including voting and campaigning. Other students are appointed or volunteer for responsibilities in the school, such as mentoring, that also enhance their personal development.
- The school provided evidence of citizenship having an impact on the curriculum across a range of subjects including, for example, geography and drama, in the spirit of the revised National Curriculum aim of educating 'responsible citizens'. Additionally there are contributions from specific activities, such as an 'Eco day' for gifted and talented students. I also observed the contribution made to citizenship understanding in an assembly on 'choices' which contained a political perspective.
- Students' charitable work was acknowledged in correspondence, for example the substantial donations made to help a linked school in Japan and to improve clean water supply in a community in Nigeria.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Much has been done in the last three years to develop citizenship in the curriculum and the broader life of the school. Citizenship as a subject is well led by a specialist who additionally brings practical understanding of GCSE assessment from examining experience. Work has also been done to promote citizenship across the curriculum.
- A citizenship scheme of work gives appropriate attention to concepts and processes and provides for a wide range of approaches, including opportunities for active citizenship.
- There is an appropriate focus on raising standards including student tracking, the identification of underachievement and an intervention programme. As yet, however, overall achievement has not been raised to 'good' because of weaknesses in the curriculum.
- The school has a broadly accurate view of strengths and weaknesses; development planning is well focused on the need to improve the curriculum.
- Good training links have been maintained, including membership of a professional association.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- rebalancing the Key Stage 3 curriculum to give due weight to democracy, government and politics so that students can achieve well across the full

programme and reviewing students' entitlement to citizenship in Key Stage 4

- considering how specific learning objectives can be communicated in the context of lively and interesting lesson starters
- continuing to emphasise skills of discussion and debate and the need to speak in turn and listen to the views of others.

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