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Ms S Coulton
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Coulton

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 3 and 4 October 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 nine lessons, an assembly and meetings with the students' leadership team.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is good.

- Students' actively participate in lessons; they express themselves with confidence and explore ideas and concepts together challenging different view points in a constructive manner. They are confident in seeking clarifications both from each other and teachers when they are unsure.
- Achievement in citizenship through the cross-curricular approach is good. It is better in Key Stage 3 than at Key Stage 4. Students' understanding of rights and responsibilities is particularly strong, as is their knowledge of identity and diversity through their roles in the school as leaders, sports leaders, counsellors, ambassadors and mentors. Students are able to evaluate the role of citizenship in shaping decisions and influencing systems to help them draw sensible conclusions.

- Attitudes to the subject are very positive. Students build up good background knowledge as they progress through the school and recognise the part citizenship plays in their learning and everyday life. Their understanding of law and the justice system is well developed. Knowledge and understanding of politics, democracy, national and international affairs are less secure.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Teachers develop students' skills of enquiry and research well across various subjects. Those who incorporate citizenship into their lessons do so to good effect. In a high proportion of lessons observed, teachers had an accurate view of how citizenship elements might enhance the lesson. For example, in a geography lesson, students explored identities and diversity, advocacy and representation when seeking to increase their knowledge and understanding of the world we live in.
- Teachers deal with sensitive and sometimes controversial issues well, encouraging open and frank discussions with confidence. For example, in a mathematics lesson, students discussed the recent disturbances in Birmingham and the impact on the local community. Students discussed their views frankly and were particularly vocal when debating the impact that the current economic climate may have on their future education and employment opportunities.
- A range of active approaches is used including role play, discussion work and imaginative use of interactive whiteboard technology where, for example, students download film clips from YouTube to help illustrate how violence is portrayed on the screen and its impact on young people.
- Marking of students' work is regular and often includes an evaluation of a student's participation in the wider community. However, formal assessment procedures in the subject are less well developed.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Citizenship provision provides memorable experiences for good quality learning. It is mainly delivered through personal, social and health education, social and emotional aspects of learning, English, religious education, history and geography. The cross-curricular provision extends to other programmes such as Learning for Life and the whole-school approach to Participation, Achievement, Citizenship Endeavour and Responsibility (PACER). The exploration of local issues and links forged with the wider community provide a range of good learning experiences within and beyond the school. The school's sports specialist status contributes well to the development of leadership skills; for example, through the sports leaders programme. Currently however, there is no overall picture of provision as it is not mapped or analysed in sufficient detail. The school recognises that this makes curriculum planning difficult,

particularly at Key Stage 4 and is planning to introduce a short course in citizenship for all its students.

- Some of the cross-curricular theme days, for example Black History Week, add another dimension to aspects of citizenship. Good links are made with other agencies. These and other activities encourage some students to participate in local, national and international issues. The school has established strong links with a school in South Africa.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is good.

- The leadership team has a clear vision for the subject that places it at the heart of the school. The whole-school ethos is built on the foundations of PACER. This supports citizenship well and encourages an appreciation of the value of active citizenship. Consequently, the subject makes a good contribution to the cohesion evident in this diverse and well-integrated school community.
- Despite some significant strengths, there are some weaker elements. The monitoring and evaluation of citizenship are underdeveloped at present. Plans are in place to strengthen this and extend the role of the subject leader to ensure that teaching and outcomes in the subject are more closely monitored. The school recognises that the Key Stage 4 curriculum and assessment procedures are underdeveloped.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- mapping the current curriculum provision against the citizenship requirements to provide depth and progression from Key Stage 3 to 4
- establishing thorough assessment procedures to monitor students' knowledge and understanding so that their progress is more closely monitored as they move from Key Stage 3 to 4.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop citizenship in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector