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23 November 2011

Mr D Sands
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sands

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 16 and 17 November 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 five lessons, as well as visits to parts of sixth form sessions related to citizenship, an assembly, and a 'student voice' meeting.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is outstanding.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is outstanding.

- Attainment is above average. Of the 60 students who took GCSE citizenship in 2011, 85% gained grade C or better and 25% gained the highest grades. Key Stage 3 assessments show the great majority of students are attaining at or above expected levels.
- Lesson observations and scrutiny of students' work showed that students across the attainment range make outstanding progress. In class and in written work, including assessments, students demonstrated that they have high expectations and ambition to meet their challenging targets.
- Students demonstrate particular strengths in the development of enquiry skills, advocacy and representation and campaigning. Their understanding

of justice, rights and responsibilities and identity and diversity is stronger than of parliamentary government and politics.

- Students interviewed said that they enjoy citizenship because of the opportunities to debate topical issues of concern to them. Students make the most of opportunities to work collaboratively in active citizenship projects. Some students made outstanding progress in enquiry and research in the time available.
- There are very high levels of participation through the broader life of the school, with all students having the opportunity to take part in active citizenship projects, including 'student voice'. Sixth formers, too, showed high levels of responsibility and take part in active citizenship projects.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is outstanding.

- Lessons were observed in citizenship, English and geography, where the lesson content was explicitly linked to citizenship issues. All lessons observed were good and some outstanding teaching was observed. Lessons were well planned with close attention to individual students' starting points. Teacher input, resources and the organisation of groups helped to ensure that all students made rapid progress.
- Lessons demonstrated the very good subject knowledge of teachers, for example in the quality of questioning, the way teachers dealt with controversial issues and in their knowledge of examination requirements and protocols. Students' books showed the outcomes of consistently high-quality teaching and learning. In particular, very high expectations were evident in formally assessed pieces of work, reflecting the outstanding teaching received.
- Assessment is of high quality with good feedback through comments and marking. Using the new faculty system, targets are made clear to students. In GCSE classes, very good use is made of examination criteria.
- Students are able to influence the work of the school through 'student voice'. The accomplishments of this group are valued by their peers.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is good.

- In Key Stage 3, the provision of two periods of citizenship each week in Year 9 enables good coverage of the programme of study, although less emphasis is given to parliamentary government and politics. For those students who opt for GCSE citizenship, there is clear progression from Key Stage 3. For others, further opportunities are provided within PSHE to study politics and the law, but this is optional. Contributions are made by other subjects, particularly religious education and geography, with joint planning for topics such as globalisation.
- Provision in the sixth form is good, with a unit on government and politics in the General Studies programme as well as other opportunities for active

citizenship. The social enterprise dimension is very strong, as seen in action in the work of the 'Interact' group.

- The school provides many other citizenship opportunities in the curriculum, for example through 'Deep Learning Days' and extra-curricular activities. There is a very strong international dimension. Very good use is made of the local community and visitors to the school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is outstanding.

- The school has a very strong vision for citizenship, which sits firmly alongside its specialism and is central to its ethos. The school has secured and retained specialists who can bring expertise and innovation to the subject. Although the subject leader is relatively new in post, the support of senior and middle leaders provides a secure foundation upon which the subject can be further developed.
- Monitoring and evaluation of outcomes are accurate; the school knows the priorities for development. Within the faculty, initiatives have been taken to raise standards by improving the quality and meaningfulness of assessment. Advice has been sought and acted upon on the teaching of sensitive and controversial issues.
- The school gives significant authority to student voice. Some opportunities are lost to replicate democratic procedures because of the relative informality of this group.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- considering how, in Key Stage 4, a more comprehensive citizenship programme can be provided for those who do not opt for the GCSE course
- continuing to develop stronger provision in the area of parliamentary government and politics in Key Stage 3.

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

Scott Harrison
Additional Inspector