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Ms Bernice Astling
Principal
Erasmus Darwin Academy
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Dear Ms Astling

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 28 and 29 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 10 lessons, 3 tutor periods and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is good with some outstanding features.

- Students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship key concepts are secure at both Key Stages 3 and 4. These are particularly strong in the sixth form enabling students to play an active role both within academy and at local and national level. Students have a good understanding of democratic politics, are able to evaluate the role that citizens take in shaping decisions, in influencing systems and drawing sensible conclusions.
- Achievement at Key Stage 4 is good, and for some it is outstanding. By 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. All students follow a Humanities GCSE course in Years 10 and 11. This course has strong elements of personal, social, health, citizenship and religious education components. Over 53% of the students gained a GCSE examination grade A* to C in 2011, their first year of this

course being introduced. The current Year 11 are set do even better with over 72% being predicted to gain A* to C in 2012.

- A key strength is the work to promote active citizenship across the school and beyond. For example, the work of house leaders, student council, peer mentors, prefects help them to take greater responsibilities. These and other roles and responsibilities help students to gain an excellent understanding of democracy, rights and responsibilities, identity and diversity. The academy encourages students to participate in other competitive activities such as standing for head boy and girl, sports leaders and speak at the National Youth Parliament. Attitudes to citizenship are very positive. Students find the subject relevant and value the extensive opportunities to discuss current and world affairs as well as topical events.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- The work in citizenship is suitably challenging. It stretches students of all ages and abilities. Teachers, especially those who are specialist, demonstrate clear commitment and understanding of citizenship learning. They use their good subject knowledge to engage students with current topical issues to illustrate concepts. For example, students expressed strong views about the governments' intention to increase student fees and proposals for the future pension scheme. They are aware of and expressed concerns for the possible impact these changes may have on their future lives.
- Teachers help students deal with sensitive and controversial issues well, encouraging open and frank discussions. For example students questioned the concepts of good and evil and whether any evil act could be justified under any circumstances. Teachers use a range of approaches including discussion and debates, role play and imaginative use of interactive whiteboard technology and research machines. They carefully plan their lessons to help develop critical skills that help guide students to make informed decisions. Assessment procedures are established and developing well. These include an appropriate range of teacher, self and peer assessment. Students, particularly at Key Stage 4 are aware of their current and target levels.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is good with some outstanding features.

- There is discrete provision for the delivery of citizenship across the academy including the sixth form. The provision is rich and varied, providing a wide range of experiences that contribute well to students' development. Key concepts are clearly identified in curriculum planning; however, the use of key processes is less routinely noted particularly at Key Stage 3. Considerable reinforcement of the discrete provision is gained through the academy's specialist sports status. Students speak

positively of their learning in Religious Studies, history, geography, and at AS and A Level sociology and psychology and how teachers extend their knowledge, skills and understanding of citizenship through these subjects.

- Some themes explored during activity days add another dimension to many aspects of citizenship learning. The good links with other agencies and the wider community encourage all students to engage with issues beyond the school and involve them in local, national and international issues. The academy's links with schools particularly in China further enrich students' understanding of life in another part of the world.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is good.

- A clear underpinning vision and support for the subject are evident from the leadership team. Citizenship learning has a distinct and prominent profile in the life and work of the academy. The strong ethos is summed up in their vision statement of 'achievement through endeavour' covering Excellence, Respect, Equality, Inspiration, Friendship, Determination and Courage. These are expressed through the Olympic and Paralympics values; which places the learners at the heart.
- The academy's atmosphere strongly supports active citizenship. Participation rates by students in taking responsible actions through the wide range of activities are monitored well. Records show that significant majority of the students are actively involved in at least one activity both in and outside the academy. Their participation rates are recorded in student's academic portfolios stay with them throughout their time at the academy. Despite some significant strengths, there are some weaker elements. For example, assessment procedures, and the monitoring and evaluation of citizenship is under developed at present particularly at Key Stage 3. There are plans in place to strengthen this and extend the roles of the faculty and subject leader in order to ensure that teaching and outcomes in the subject are more closely evaluated.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- strengthening the monitoring and evaluation procedures in the subject across the school and particularly at Key Stage 3
- developing the assessment of learning in citizenship across the school and particularly at 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.

Yours sincerely

Rashida Sharif
Her Majesty's Inspector