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26 March 2012

Dr C Kirkman  
Headteacher  
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Dear Dr Kirkman

### **Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship**

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 14 and 15 March 2012 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.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good with outstanding features.

#### **Achievement in citizenship**

Achievement in citizenship is good.

- Students' achievement is good with the majority of students demonstrating good knowledge and understanding and the ability to apply the skills of critical thinking and enquiry well.
- Students report that they enjoy opportunities to reflect upon and discuss a variety of issues. They are encouraged to express themselves and justify their opinions through a relevant, thought-provoking curriculum. This makes a strong contribution to students' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.
- The school's work in promoting active citizenship is a key strength. A wealth of opportunities exists to influence and lead change within school and beyond. In addition to a range of roles in school, such as peer

mediators, school councillors, house captains and student voice activities, students participate in the local Youth Parliament, contribute to the 'Your Bay, Your Say' forum to discuss local issues and also undertake a range of action projects in association with partner schools in Uganda.

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

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good with outstanding features.

- Most teaching is lively and well-paced, engaging students through interesting and varied materials. Teaching is characterised by good relationships, detailed planning with a good structure for learning and clarity about the learning outcomes that are sought. Assessment is developing well, particularly the focused dilemma assessment in Year 9.
- In particular, the subject specialists are highly committed experts; they demonstrate excellent understanding of both the subject's range and content and the processes that students work through. Sensitive and controversial issues are dealt with confidently with an excellent level of challenge posed to students.
- An outstanding history lesson made an excellent contribution to citizenship. The teacher's thoughtful questioning challenged students throughout the lesson to justify and expand on their answers; consequently, learning was rapid with students given ample opportunities to indicate what they knew and understood about prohibition. However, on occasions, teachers' questioning is insufficiently probing to promote depth of learning. At these times, the expectations of students' verbal contributions are not high enough and teachers are too easily satisfied by minimal responses.

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

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is good.

- Although the time available for discrete citizenship is constrained, through careful and thoughtful planning by subject leaders, the time available is well used to cover the full range of subject content. This, together with contributions from other subjects, together with the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme, 'Opening Minds' curriculum in Year 7 and 'Learning for Life' programme combines together well to provide a coherent curriculum for the subject, which has good impact on students' learning.
- The curriculum is informed by current initiatives and responsive to local, national and global issues. Excellent links are forged with a range of external partners and the wider community to respond to students' needs and enhance their learning. In particular, the international links with schools in Uganda are prompting shared curriculum projects; these are having a powerful effect in fostering mutual understanding of the challenges of life in very different contexts.

- The contribution made by some subject areas is good; for example, in personal, social and health education, history, geography and RE. In other areas, this is sometimes variable depending on teachers' expertise and confidence in fully realising citizenship objectives in their lessons.

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

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is good with outstanding features.

- Strong support for the subject from you and your senior team provides a secure foundation for citizenship learning. In addition, the wider ethos of the school and initiatives such as vertical tutoring and the commitment to use the student voice to improve provision, support citizenship learning very well.
- The subject is very well led and managed with clear, detailed subject documentation in place. Good partnership working is evident between the subject leader and lead teacher. These leaders demonstrate real passion for the subject and a willingness to be creative in exploring new approaches. Consequently, curriculum development is innovative and ongoing.
- A number of teachers willingly contribute to citizenship education. Some of these would benefit from additional support and guidance in order for citizenship learning to be maximised in their lessons.

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

- ensuring that all teachers provide a consistently high level of challenge to students through extended questioning and maintaining high expectations of students' verbal contributions in lessons
- providing non-specialist teachers with support and guidance so that they might fully realise citizenship learning objectives in their lessons.

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

**Judith Matharu**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**