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4 May 2012

Mr A Pugh
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Dear Mr Pugh

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 25 and 26 April 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; observation of eight lessons and a series of learning walks during an alternative curriculum day.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is satisfactory.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Under threat of closure two years ago, the school responded with an organised campaign of protests, media events and marches. Students speak with great conviction of how they managed to have their voice heard at the highest levels, indicative of the ethos which exists today.
- Students show great interest in citizenship issues, particularly campaigning to help those in need. One such campaign has raised over £2,500 for a student at the school who has a brain tumour and needs urgent funds to receive surgery in the United States of America. When reflecting upon this achievement one student remarked: 'We've done lots of little things that have become a big thing.'

- Students have a sound knowledge of citizenship issues. Key Stage 3 students spoke confidently about their knowledge of a range of topics including how parliament works. However, opportunities are missed to reinforce subject knowledge at Key Stage 4, which hampers progress.
- Reports to parents highlight aspects of achievement in citizenship; however, they do not recognise the vast amount of advocacy and participation by some students. For example, one student had not only baked over 100 cakes to raise money for one of his peers, he also spent the alternative curriculum day (ACD) 'climbing the Eiffel Tower' by walking up the equivalent amount of stairs in school. Such innovation and heartfelt commitment from students is not uncommon.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is satisfactory.

- The strongest teaching was seen within the humanities faculty and during the ACD. It is characterised by detailed planning stating clear objectives and outcomes, meaningful, engaging resources and excellent subject knowledge. Planning ensures that the needs of all students are met regardless of ability.
- Students say that they very much enjoy experiential learning, a regular feature of the ACD. For example, in a Year 7 session on the work of parliament, students were captivated by their virtual tour of the House of Commons. The expert subject knowledge of the teacher combined with skilful questioning ensured that students made good progress and were able to explain their learning. Likewise, in a Year 11 session about the law relating to knife crime, students were visibly shocked by compelling CCTV footage of knife crimes coupled with the voice of the victim's parents. They were able to recall much of what they had learnt in this session and said how much they had enjoyed working with the police officer who delivered it.
- In some sessions, students do not make good progress because too few opportunities are provided for extended periods of independent learning. Moreover, planning does not take full account of students' abilities and therefore does not always meet their specific needs. Student engagement wanes when activities are not stimulating; they are unable to develop skills of enquiry and are not fully engaged by the resources.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is satisfactory.

- The curriculum has elements of good practice, for example, visits to local faith centres and aspects of ACDs. ACDs cover a wide variety of topics including the Diamond Jubilee, Sport Relief, diversity, criminal law, the work of parliament and human rights. However, the impact of these days is diluted by the lack of a thematic approach.

- The curriculum is enriched by links with trading standards, the police, local faith centres and the wider community. Yet, opportunities are missed across the curriculum to deliver the full range and content of the citizenship programmes.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Leaders and managers are ambitious for this subject and active citizenship has a high profile across the school. Two members of staff share responsibility for leading citizenship and personal, social and health education (PSHE), and organising ACDs.
- Current leaders of citizenship are not subject specialists and the strong subject knowledge which exists within the school is not fully utilised to raise achievement.
- Monitoring, evaluation and review is evident, particularly in feedback from the ACD days. However, opportunities are missed to monitor achievement and attitudes in the subject in greater depth.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement by:
 - providing opportunities for students to consolidate subject knowledge at Key Stage 4
 - taking a thematic approach to Alternative Curriculum Days
 - ensuring that achievement within citizenship is explicit in reports to parents
- improving the quality of teaching by:
 - ensuring that learning is planned in sufficient depth to allow all abilities to make good progress
 - sharing best practice in creative, engaging, enquiry-based independent learning
- strengthening leadership and management by:
 - making best use of staff with strong subject knowledge
 - ensuring that whole school procedures for monitoring, evaluation and review are consistently applied to citizenship.

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

Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector