

06 November 2006

Mr D Franklin
Headteacher
Chelmer Valley High School
Court Road
Broomfield
Chelmsford
Essex
CM1 7ER

Dear Mr Franklin

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 and 18 October 2006 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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with pupils, staff, the school council, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the citizenship curriculum.

- In the 'embedded' citizenship work viewed, pupils all gained new knowledge but in varying degrees. In history, students' verbal contribution was good and many were making the links between historical and modern issues for themselves.
- The theme of 'consequences' was explored through improvisation in Year 7 drama and a few groups acted out well and demonstrated empathy with the victims of crime.
- A revised structure for the school council linked to the five Every Child Matters outcomes has had demonstrable benefits, as seen in the work of the health sub group in negotiation with school meal contractors. School council members in Key Stage 4 were able to put forward creative and alternative ways of seeking pupils' views and were

confident that some of the decisions with which they are involved are realistic and of value.

- Students interviewed were able, using their own language, to describe well the range of citizenship related skills they develop in school generally. Many, but by no means all, are well disposed to it, take a mature and forward looking view and have a critical but informed perspective on party political issues.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

From the small sample seen, teaching within discrete subject areas is satisfactory and sometimes good.

- Teachers are mindful of the requirement to ensure a citizenship element within lessons but have insufficient understanding of how they might best achieve this within the constraints of their subject. Thus citizenship is not sufficiently explicit and even more could be made of topical issues to support learning.
- The marking of students' work on the new free-standing citizenship course has begun a dialogue between the teacher and student. Teacher annotations raise new questions for students to consider.
- Plans to introduce assessment are good and timely and the approach will encompass mid year student reviews, whole school academic days and peer assessment. Whilst still at relatively formative stage, the quality of written citizenship reports to parents is good and the indications are that it will improve.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory

- The school has recently introduced a discrete citizenship programme at Key Stage 3; otherwise the model of delivery is by embedding it across host subjects. A few enrichment days occur.
- Initial citizenship audits have been carried out within each department with some, for instance geography and humanities, making logical and helpful linkages between the host curriculum and citizenship expectations but other departments have been more cursory.
- Overall, the three strands of the citizenship curriculum are not sufficiently informing planning but staff, in the main, understand and see the relevance of a cross curricular entitlement.
- The discrete programme is obviously a new departure and much will hinge on the success and relevance of this course in embedding citizenship teaching across the school.

Leadership and management of citizenship

- You and your senior managers have strengthened the position of citizenship considerably. Issues raised in this area in the last Ofsted inspection are being addressed and the capacity for further improvement is good.

- Vitally, the school has opted to direct new resources to citizenship by way of a dedicated co-ordinator. The coordinator is therefore new in post but she and her line manager have moved quickly to bring greater clarity to citizenship and give it more presence.
- A staff handbook has been created and has the makings of a helpful document.
- The coordinator is integrating assessment procedures and policies with those of the school in general which help affirm the position of citizenship.
- Senior managers point to a good track record of peer led activities in the school and resurgence in the student voice, a view HMI would concur with.

Inclusion

The school ethos encourages inclusion and successfully creates a climate in which students seek to succeed in class and through extra curricular activities. Teachers lesson planning is generally mindful of the needs of the full range of abilities. Links with parents are good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the need for curriculum planning to take more account of the requirements of the citizenship programme of study
- a continued focus on monitoring and assessment to help underpin the citizenship programme
- the need to monitor and learn from the outcomes of the new discrete citizenship scheme at Key Stage 3.

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

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector