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Mr Phil Matthews  
Acting Principal  
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Dear Mr Matthews

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 12 and 13 December 2006 to look at work in citizenship.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on any evidence of provision for the part of the programme of study concerned with Britain's diversity.

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.

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

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be satisfactory. This judgement is in agreement with the school's own self-evaluation of the subject.

The ethos of the school is conducive to the development of a coherent citizenship programme, and the school is, rightly, proud of the involvement of its students in a wide range of activities that enable them to develop into good, active citizens. However, as the school recognises, there are significant gaps in the provision of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject, particularly in respect of the coverage of the full programme of study, and the coherence of the curriculum.

## Achievement and standards

- Students develop good personal and social skills during their time at the college, particularly those who participate fully in the wide range of extra-curricular activities offered in the school. They learn to act responsibly, and to think carefully about their local community and the wider world.
- The standard of students' written work is satisfactory, with some good work seen at Key Stage 4. However, many students complete insufficient written work at both Key Stages. Many students, particularly the more able, acquire a sound knowledge of local, national and global institutions. However, many less able students display a very limited knowledge and understanding of citizenship themes. Students' oral work in the subject is limited, because they have too few opportunities to develop verbal answers in detail, or to give presentations.
- Most students take the GCSE in citizenship in Key Stage 4, as part of a combined course with religious education. Students' progress on this course is hindered by the small amount of written work that is expected of them, and the relatively narrow coverage of the specification.

## Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

- The lessons seen during the visit were either satisfactory or good. Much thought goes into lesson planning, ensuring that students are clear about what they are going to learn. Teachers are committed, and most are knowledgeable about the subject. Classroom management is sound, and most students are attentive and work productively. In a number of lessons, some interesting materials and ideas were used to convey knowledge. For example, in some lessons effective use was made of Hailsham as a microcosm of the wider world to help students to connect their own experiences to broader citizenship themes.
- There is considerable scope for improving the extent to which students acquire the skills of enquiry and communication, in the context of citizenship, in lessons. For example, students would benefit from more opportunities to conduct research, make presentations to the class, develop oral contributions more fully, use information and communications technology (ICT) more creatively, and work collaboratively. The school also recognises that greater use of topical issues as a vehicle for learning about citizenship would help to engage more students in the subject.
- Assessment of citizenship, as the school recognises, is weak.

## Quality of the curriculum

- Many aspects of the programme of study can be located within the college's curriculum, and there is the potential to provide a very good standard of citizenship education. Much of the requisite knowledge and understanding is taught in discrete lessons in citizenship and religious education, and in sociology for those students who opt for it.

Opportunities for students to engage in participation and responsible action both within and outside the school are good. Many students develop sound political literacy during their time at school. However, the citizenship curriculum contains two main weaknesses. Firstly, it is fragmented, making it difficult for students (or staff) to recognise a coherent programme that covers all aspects of the programme of study, and links the three strands. Secondly, there are some significant gaps in the knowledge and understanding that students acquire, especially at Key Stage 3.

- College leaders recognise the need to identify more carefully where, and how, each element of the programme of study is delivered, and whether each element is covered in sufficient breadth and depth. In particular, there needs to be a clearer link between the extra curricular activities that are defined as citizenship by the school and the National Curriculum programme of study. Similarly, an audit of taught lessons needs to establish where there are gaps in students' knowledge and understanding, for example, on electoral systems and on how the economy works.
- Work undertaken in respect of the school's dual specialist status in sports and in business and enterprise offers much potential to contribute to the citizenship curriculum. Again, it is recognised that this potential needs to be mapped against the programme of study if it is to be realised. Closer coordination between curriculum and pastoral leaders would also enable the significant contribution made to school life by the student council, and by the house system, to be linked to the citizenship curriculum.

#### Leadership and management of citizenship

- College leaders are committed to ensuring that young people at the school develop into informed, active citizens, and the ethos of the college is conducive to developing a well-rounded programme of citizenship education. The school's specialist status, and its development as a full service extended school, offer much potential for citizenship development. The college's self evaluation of citizenship is accurate.
- Development of subject leadership has been hindered to an extent by a lack of continuity in recent years. Clear leadership is now in place, although there is further work to do to develop the teamwork that is necessary to bring the ambitions for citizenship to fruition.

Subject issue: evidence of provision for the part of the programme of study concerned with Britain's diversity

- The school's approach to the aspect of citizenship covering the origins and implications of diversity in the United Kingdom is undeveloped, having only recently been introduced into the curriculum. During the visit, lessons on multiculturalism gave a sound, although not particularly challenging, introduction to the global origins of contemporary culture. The college recognises the need to develop work on the origins and implications of changing ethnic and other identities in modern Britain.

However, partly as a consequence of the existence of a significant Traveller community in Hailsham, students are particularly well-informed, and enlightened, about this aspect of diversity.

## Inclusion

- The college is highly inclusive, and all students are very well supported. Training materials aimed at raising staff's understanding and knowledge of the local Traveller community are exemplary. In the context of citizenship, school leaders recognise that work needs to be done to raise expectations of what lower attaining students can know and understand. Lower attaining students' grasp of political literacy is noticeably weaker than others.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- identify where citizenship is taking place throughout the curriculum, both formal and informal, and where adjustments could be made to ensure full coverage of the National Curriculum programme of study
- review teaching methods to ensure that students of all abilities are encouraged to participate more in the subject through developing their skills of enquiry and communication, especially through the study of topical issues
- build on the current good work undertaken through the house system, and the student council, to involve students more in the running of the school
- increase the amount of written work that students do in citizenship, and improve the assessment of that work.

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.

Thank you again for the warm hospitality offered to me by all during the visit.

Yours sincerely

Alan Hinchliffe  
Her Majesty's Inspector