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Mr Kerridge  
The Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Kerridge

Ofsted survey inspection programme – science and citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during the joint visit of Ian Richardson HMI, and Roderick Passant AI on 5 and 6 March to look at work in science and design and 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons.

## Science

The overall effectiveness of science was judged to be good.

### Achievement and Standards

Achievement and standards in science are satisfactory.

- Standards have risen significantly at both Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 over the last three years to be around the national average.
- Compared with other similar schools pupils' achievement is average at the end of Key Stage 3 and at GCSE.
- In the last validated set of performance data in 2005, science was performing significantly below other subjects in terms of percentage of pupils being awarded GCSE grades A\* - C.

- However, in 2006 the percentage of pupils achieving grades A\* - C in science increased significantly to 45%, bringing it in line with other subjects and closer to the national average.
- From 2003-04, when the results for pupils at the end of Key Stage 3 were significantly below the national average for pupils in similar schools, standards have risen to the national average for 2005-06.
- No significant differences are seen in the progress made by different groups, such as gender or pupils with learning difficulties.
- In the main teachers show clear expectations of pupils behaving well and acting responsibly and pupils respond positively.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in science is most often good or better.

- All lessons seen were at least satisfactory and much outstanding teaching was seen.
- The best teaching is based on thorough planning. This is currently based on published schemes but the department is making it possible for innovation in teaching to be captured and shared with others.
- Development of good practice does not currently involve a systematic approach to teachers observing the teaching of others.
- Pupils judge the quality of teaching they receive very highly, and describe how many science teachers make lessons engaging and interesting. They appreciate the variety of work and their teachers' enthusiasm and energy.
- Pupils are positive about the benefits of target setting, and they feel well informed about how they can make improvements.
- Written comment on pupils' work is well developed although not completely consistent. This marking informs pupils not just where weaknesses and strengths are but sets short term targets for pupils to respond to.
- The full range of assessment for learning is used to good effect in some lessons but is not well developed in others.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Lesson planning, based on published schemes, ensures that the department meets the requirements of the National Curriculum.
- The department makes references in its planning to key skills of literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (ICT), but not to other areas of development such as social, moral, spiritual and cultural.
- The department has generated curriculum maps, and has the increased use of ICT in teaching and learning in its development plan. Pupils describe how little they use ICT in science lessons.

- The department has taken the opportunity of new science GCSEs in 2006 to provide a number of pathways for pupils to follow. These include applied, additional and triple science provision, thus meeting the needs of a wide range of pupils.
- Booster classes in Key Stage 3 and for pupils on GCSE courses have helped to raise the attainment of pupils significantly.

## Leadership and Management

Leadership and management are good.

- The collection of data from the assessment of pupils is carried out systematically, and data analysed effectively to check on standards attained.
- The department has clear targets for raising standards and individual targets are set with pupils which they appreciate.
- The analysis of performance and the vision for the science department's development is expressed clearly in the improvement plan, and reports to governors and to senior leadership.
- Planning for courses is thorough, with a clear rationale given for the choice of GCSE science courses introduced in September 2006.
- The benefits of science specialist college status are evident in the science department, and are described mainly in terms of resources. There is yet to be a clear analysis of the science department's role in developing other subjects and aspect of the school.
- The department is working in an effective collaborative way, and the areas for improvement are well identified and appropriate action planned.

## Inclusion

Provision for inclusion is good.

- The management of the school and the department are keeping watch on data to identify any variations in progress due to gender or ability.
- Analysis of data and classroom observation gives no indication of pupils not making appropriate progress.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- further implementing assessment for learning techniques to engage pupils and check on the progress they make
- developing teaching and learning and sharing good practice through a more systematic approach to peer observation by staff
- developing tracking systems such as dedicated software to allow the evaluation of the progress made by each pupil
- ensuring that the pupils' voice contributes to the evaluation of the teaching and learning in science

- giving pupils increased opportunities to use ICT in science activities.

## Citizenship

The overall effectiveness was judged to be inadequate.

It was not possible to see the core provision for citizenship which is taught within the school's personal development programme (PDP) and occurs at the same time for the whole school. There are relative strengths in aspects of the provision but currently these aspects do not mesh well together. The school's accurate self-evaluation recognises this fact and the school improvement plan for this year identifies the steps taken to make the citizenship more coherent. There have been a number of recent leadership and management changes and the co-ordinator for citizenship has been in post in effect from January 2007.

## Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in citizenship are below average.

- By the end of Year 9 and Year 11 pupils' knowledge about key aspects of citizenship are below average. It is evident from examining pupils' PDP folders that discussion plays a major part of the lesson activities. From meeting pupils, it is evident that they are articulate and able to express their ideas orally with confidence.
- Written work in the folders mainly consists of personal notes and jottings or is confined to brief answers to worksheet questions. Work was unmarked. The school should consider ensuring a requirement for some extended writing in the citizenship core provision where the expectations match those seen elsewhere in the curriculum. For example, in work on class rules seen in some of the Year 7 folders the topic seemed to be treated superficially and in a rushed fashion compared to the rigour and imaginative presentation of work seen in History's exploration of writing a Magna Carta for the school.
- ICT skills seen in Year 8 and Year 10 are good. Pupils are able to research, for example, Fair Trade and synthesise their work into presentations using appropriate software.
- Personal development is good. Pupils are generous, caring and compassionate young people, as evidenced by their response to charity appeals. They demonstrate that they can take the initiative and take responsibility and contribute to the community when given the opportunity. Sixth form students are articulate and mature in their discussions about their work developing the school council.

## Quality of teaching and learning

No direct teaching of citizenship was observed. The teaching I observed contributed to different degrees to the school's general citizenship ethos and

to pupils' personal development, but not to their understanding of citizenship as a subject.

The quality of teaching and learning seen was good.

- Overall, pupils made good progress in the lessons seen because of the quality of relationships, teachers' good subject knowledge and high expectations and the variety of approaches used. The school has identified assessment in citizenship as being weak and requiring development.
- Currently progress in Citizenship is not tracked and the subject is not reported specifically to parents but subsumed within the form teacher's overall comment. The school currently issues certificates and inclusion on the roll of honour to mark pupils' achievements. It currently does not have a system of tracking where pupils take responsible action or participate within the school or broader community in order to ensure that this is an entitlement for all.

#### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is unsatisfactory.

- The school has identified a core programme of life skills for the whole school, which covers the programmes of study for citizenship. The programme is carefully constructed so that there are opportunities to revisit aspects of the work. The programme provides teaching materials and suggested approaches.
- The programme is taught within the school's PDP programme by the form teacher within an allocated 35 minute slot during the week. If followed, it could provide a strong central core upon which to build. Currently, however, form tutors tend to interpret the programme according to their interests. Generally, they seem more comfortable with the life skills elements than issues relating to political literacy.
- The school has begun a recent audit of subject contributions which is not yet complete. Some subjects, such as ICT and Modern Languages, have responded to the audit by using specific guidance about how their subject can contribute to citizenship, others identify a more generalised contribution. It would be helpful to remind colleagues of the distinction between citizenship as a subject and more generalised concepts of citizenship. The school may find it useful to identify a narrower range of subjects that could be approached to make specific inputs into the citizenship scheme of work.
- Further work is carried out in themed weeks. During the visit Fair Trade was a theme being explored within a range of subjects. 'Conscience' week is another example where the timetable is given over to a range of life skills activities.

- Regular worship and faculty assemblies around commemorative events such as Remembrance Day and the Holocaust contribute to the school's Christian ethos and broad concepts of citizenship.
- There are a range of out-of-school clubs which provide opportunities for pupils to contribute: for example, senior pupils overseeing younger pupils use of the climbing wall. The school council run by sixth formers is currently in the process of establishing itself. For example, it has used pupil representatives drawn from across the school, to identify changes to the lunch arrangements which are to be trialled in the immediate future.
- The school's self-evaluation describes the provision as 'fragmentary' and this is accurate. Whilst some of the elements are in place or could be, they have not yet been meshed together into a coherent scheme of work.

### Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The co-ordinator has not been long in post and it is too soon to judge the impact of his work. Nevertheless, on the basis of the work undertaken in identifying what needs to be done leadership and management is satisfactory.
- The senior leadership team have a good understanding of citizenship as reflected in the citizenship policy. The self-evaluation is good and citizenship is identified for specific improvement within the school's improvement plan.
- There is good capacity for improvement.

### Subject issue: provision for teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

The provision for teaching and learning about Britain's diversity is good. There are specific units in the curriculum which cover themes such as immigration and the making of Britain. Whilst religious education explores aspects of Christian, specifically Roman Catholic religious themes, it does provide comparative examples of other faiths. The school is culturally diverse. Pupils spoken to identified the cultural diversity of the school as a strength. The school has a powerful ethos based on its faith identity in which respect for others is an ongoing theme. A sixth former describes the school as being 'more of a community than a school.'

### Inclusion

The school is inclusive. In lessons seen pupils needs were met because they were planned for and identified.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- monitoring the teaching in the personal development programme in order to ensure consistency in standards and entitlement
- considering pupils' views as part of the monitoring process
- refine subject specific contributions and map the citizenship programme which is shared with staff and pupils
- develop assessment in order to track progress in citizenship, report to parents, and ensure that pupils' contribution and responsible action is part of the citizenship entitlement.

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

Ian Richardson  
Her Majesty's Inspector