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Dame Yasmin Bevan DBE
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Dear Dame Bevan DBE

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 7 and 8 of February 2007 to look at work in citizenship. Please pass on my thanks to the pupils. I was particularly impressed with their loyalty to the school and their maturity.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on provision for teaching and learning about 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. 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 five lessons.

The overall effectiveness was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in citizenship are good.

- By the end of Year 11 pupils have a good knowledge and understanding about becoming informed citizens.

- Pupils have good skills of enquiry and communication. Pupils are articulate and confident. They use formal speech in answering questions and their thoughts are expressed clearly. They are able to debate, listen to and value the contribution of others. They are particularly articulate in talking about issues relating to diversity and what strengths they and the school gain from being such a diverse community.
- Written work shows the variation that you would expect given the range of attainment. That said, pupils can write sensitively and in depth reflecting on their experiences.
- Pupils are confident and effective users of information technology (ICT) so that they are able to present their work in a variety of ways and undertake research effectively.
- Pupils develop good skills of participation. The school's sports college status is having a very significant impact on raising standards across the school and extending the range of contexts for pupils to demonstrate responsible action. Currently the school is not tracking or assessing this element and is seeking manageable and effective systems to do so.
- Personal development in citizenship is outstanding. Pupils have very good attitudes to learning because they feel that they are partners in the learning process. There is strong mutual respect between staff and pupils. The school is a very calm place and for many pupils it is a haven. Pupils display a very strong sense of pride in the school and their own achievements within it.
- Pupils are impressive ambassadors of the school and take evident pride in it. Citizenship is seen as an important subject in empowering pupils – giving pupils 'a toolkit' to achieve their ambitions and to seek 'mediation and resolution of their problems'.
- This empowerment of pupils stems from the fact that they are supported very well, consulted and listened to, and so have a real voice in the school. One pupil commented:
 '...what makes this school council different from my other school is that here, when you talk about something it gets changed...'

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Pupils take responsibility for being part of the learning process. They are engaged by the lessons and want to do well. They anticipate that lessons will be interesting and thus they bring their energies to bear, displaying enthusiasm and enjoyment. They work well independently and in groups.
- Teachers build a safe environment where, for example, pupils can express their views honestly. They can assume a role, such as that of an MP and make a speech, or sing a RAP song knowing that other pupils will be supportive. They can express genuine reactions to events. Importantly they can ask for help and expect to get it.

- The quality of learning is underpinned by the high quality relationships that exist between pupils and teachers and the implicit trust between them.
- The quality of teaching is good and sometimes outstanding. National teaching strategies have clearly had a positive impact on the ways lessons are organised. Teachers display confidence and knowledge in their subject and are therefore prepared to take risks in using creative active approaches such as role-play, simulations and group presentations. They are sensitive to, and skilled at, using topical and controversial themes such as the 'cash for honours' debate. The use of data projectors helps in bringing this material into the classroom. ICT is used well and there is very significant potential in the school's development of a 'learning portal' in citizenship, allowing pupils to access key web sites to support their independent learning.
- Teachers know the pupils and use assessment well, so that, for example, they check understanding through questioning and adjust the teaching of the lesson in the light of that knowledge. Marking uses both praise and targets. The school is still in the process of refining assessment and finding manageable ways of tracking pupils' involvement. The school reports to parents on citizenship and undertakes an overall periodic assessment against pupil expectations in the subject.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- There are elements of the curriculum that are very strong. The school has an excellent understanding of citizenship as a subject and there is a very strong inter-relationship between the three strands that make up citizenship education. There is a strong common entitlement to the coherent citizenship programme covering all the elements in the citizenship programme of studies.
- This core coverage is supplemented by associated work in other subjects so that, for example a drama unit on 'Let him have it' (the Bentley case) links with work on crime and young people.
- The school is committed to ensuring participation and responsible action is part of the core entitlement for all pupils. The school makes very good use of activities such as the school, year, and sports councils; Luton Youth Parliament; Luton Council of Faiths; as well as buddies, mentors, assembly presentations; the expanding range of contexts for coaching and after hours participation provided by the Sports College; as well as high rates of participation in other activities.
- Further important work in citizenship is carried out in assemblies. The school has a determination from the local standing advisory council on religious education so that it does not have to provide a Christian assembly; citizenship provides a powerful alternative context and assemblies are identified as being 'citizenship assemblies.' These provide further opportunities for topical issues or themes to be raised. The

assembly theme for the week on the nature of 'Britishness' and the possibility of having multiple identities, for example, coincided with year 7 work on the same theme.

- In addition, two sessions a week are given to form tutors to raise topical affair issues and for pupils to report back on their research.
- Effective links have been established in India and Botswana and school is proceeding with seeking accreditation for the schools International Award.

Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management are outstanding.

- The overall vision for citizenship is outstanding. It is based on the belief that citizenship plays an essential and central function in developing the pupils' partnership with the school. It is seen as a means of raising standards even higher because it provides a means of empowering pupils to take greater control of their lives. Strands in the school's development interrelate extraordinarily well with the commitment that the school will do the best it can for the students by ensuring that standards are its unremitting focus. The school's specialist status is making an excellent contribution to citizenship.
- Subject leadership is excellent. Self-evaluation is very strong and there has been very good improvement since the last inspection. The capacity for future improvement is excellent.

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

- The school's teaching of diversity is excellent and does not depend upon the fact that a very wide range of ethnic heritages make up the school population. There is a constant stress within the broad citizenship curriculum upon the strengths gained from diversity. Exploration of specific themes such as 'What it is to be British', 'multiple identities' and 'immigration', (along with associated themes such as fair trade, globalisation, colonialism, racism and how to challenge discrimination,) ensure that there is a very strong underpinning of mutual respect and respect for others.
- In addition, the curriculum is supported by the very high degree of sensitivity and respect afforded by the school to its population. This is reflected in no small measure by the quality of environment and displays. The result is that pupils are not only very articulate about the advantages they gain from the school's diversity but also display considerable maturity and respect for people as individuals.

Inclusion

- The school is highly inclusive. The active approaches adopted in citizenship are inclusive. Members of staff know the pupils and meet their

needs through very effective planning. All pupils achieve well including those with learning difficulties and disabilities. The weft and warp of the school's guidance and support systems are highly effective.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- refining assessment procedures, particularly those tracking pupils' skills of participation and responsible action, in order to ensure that this strand is part of the core entitlement for all students
- developing strategies to broaden pupils' perspectives and world view, by finding opportunities for them to work in less familiar circumstances outside the safe haven of the school.

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

Rod Passant
Additional Inspector