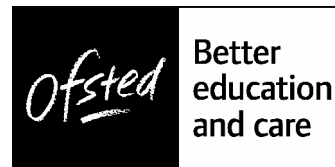


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Mrs Lorraine Dougall  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Dougall

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 and 23 February 2007 to look at work in citizenship. In addition, please pass on my thanks to the pupils.

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 13 lessons or parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness was judged good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in citizenship are good.

- By Year 8, pupils have a broad knowledge and understanding of many of the issues surrounding being an informed citizen.

- Pupils have good skills of enquiry and communication. They are able to write persuasively, accurately and at length. They are able to reflect on their experiences and show empathy in their understanding of, for example, the effects of discrimination. Pupils have good oral skills. They listen to and value the views of others and give extended answers to questions. They are confident to express a personal view even if this differs from the view of the majority. They are given good opportunities to undertake formal presentations to an audience through their contributions to the assembly programme.
- Pupils are confident users of information and communication technology (ICT). They are able to research on line effectively and manipulate the material, for example, to design an informative poster for a defined audience.
- Citizenship makes a good contribution to pupils' overall very good personal development. Pupils are developing a sense of responsibility for themselves and others. Pupils are caring and considerate and want to contribute. They take pride in their school and have made significant contributions to its development through the various consultations that have taken place.
- The Alban Pupil Forum (APF) is effective as a means of consultation and in providing the basis for effective change. For example, there were extensive consultations with the APF, and through that group the pupil body, in the reformulation of the school's behaviour and rewards policy, the environmental improvements that have taken place and in the work of transforming a bleak playground into various play zones.
- You stated that the school 'is a listening school'. It clearly values pupils' contributions and by so doing, builds an effective partnership which is reflected not only in the quality of learning in the classrooms but also in the way that pupils contribute to the running of the community, often in small but significant ways.
- There are good levels of participation in school and community activities. Currently the school is not tracking this to ensure that it is an entitlement for all nor is it assessing this element but is seeking manageable and effective systems to do so.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Pupils expect lessons to be interesting and so come prepared to contribute and be engaged by what they are asked to do. It is the consistency of good teaching which builds such very positive attitudes.
- Teachers are skilled at formulating tasks and activities that involve pupils and provide them with opportunities to reflect upon what they have learnt. For example, in one lesson the teacher randomly selected pupils into two groups, favouring one-half of the class. In the subsequent discussion, pupils were able to identify and draw parallels

from the exercise as well as express their own views of what it felt like to belong to the less favoured group.

- Relationships are good and this helps to create a safe ethos in which pupils are confident to express their individual views in an open way.
- Teachers are skilled classroom managers and make very effective use of wide ranging resources, drawing on topical material. The interactive whiteboards and data projectors are used extremely well to bring the outside world into the classroom.
- Teachers are sensitive to pupils' views but further training in managing discussions and help in navigating through contentious issues would give them even more confidence.
- Pupils are engaged in self-assessment activities at the end of units of work. Whilst subject teachers assess work contributing to citizenship from a subject standpoint more consideration needs to be given to how pupils' work can be assessed from the point of view of citizenship and how this assessment is used to track pupils' progress in the subject.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school bridges two key stages. In half the school citizenship is part of a broad programme of life skills and in the other it emerges as a subject in its own right, partially taught as a core element within a life skills programme but supported by significant contributions from other subjects. It would be helpful to all staff to remind them of the distinction in status in one key stage and the other.
- The contributions from other subjects are of good quality and enable pupils to work at depth in a particular aspect and are identified as contributing to citizenship in schemes of work. The contributions now need to be mapped and refined, made more specific and given additional weight. Other subjects and assemblies make further contributions to the culture for citizenship. The school makes extensive use of trips and visitors to the school to enhance the programme further.
- Currently there is no liaison group for citizenship with the upper school and establishing a liaison group is a priority. Whilst a large part of initial discussions will no doubt focus on aspects of curriculum coverage, the liaison will also help formulate the audience and function of Alban's assessment procedures. Essentially such a group would help determine how the upper school is going to build effectively upon the school's good provision.

### Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management are good.

- The school has a clear vision for citizenship formulated through the senior leadership team.
- The leadership by the co-ordinator is good. Although in post a relatively short time the co-ordinator has reviewed the citizenship policy and made a number of significant improvements, particularly in relation to developing the impact that pupils have through the APF.
- There has been good improvement since the last inspection. The school has the capacity to develop the current good citizenship programme into an outstanding provision.

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

The school's provision for teaching and learning about Britain's diversity is good. Specific units of work tackle the themes of diversity, discrimination and racism. For example, in religious education, pupils study world religions and the results of persecution. In geography, examination of Bedford's brick industry leads to studies of immigration and the growth of diverse communities.

Inclusion

The school is very inclusive. All pupils achieve well because teachers know the pupils and plan effectively to meet their needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- in negotiation with the upper school, establish a liaison group for citizenship to build effectively on Alban's good provision
- refine and map in more detail 'carrier' subjects' specific contribution to citizenship
- develop assessment systems which track pupils' progress in the subject and provides the assurance that taking responsible action and participation is a core entitlement for all pupils.

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