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Mr S Preston
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Dear Mr Preston

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 and 24 May 2007 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 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 and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in citizenship are satisfactory overall.

- Pupils have knowledge of key areas of the curriculum, although their understanding sometimes lacks depth.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are appropriately supported in lessons and there are good opportunities for gifted and talented pupils to engage in active citizenship through the Aim Higher Open Minds Project.

- Pupils rarely write extended pieces of work commensurate with other subjects they are studying.
- The school council is not as well developed as it could be. Meetings are teacher led, the council ambitions are modest and pupils do not feel particularly empowered.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although some aspects of teaching are inadequate.

- Most pupils enjoy the topics, pace and range of activities and the opportunity to debate, discuss and research. There are good classroom relationships which allow teachers to deal effectively with sensitive and controversial issues. However, in some lessons pupils are insufficiently challenged and little progress is made.
- There is evidence of much effective 'supporting' citizenship teaching and learning across the curriculum, particularly in English, geography, RE and science.
- Planning is not always sufficiently detailed or matched to pupils' needs. Teachers often try to cover too much ground in too little time and subsequently fail to develop pupils' understanding of subject specific concepts or vocabulary. There is a lot of reliance on video material which is not always used well and some key text books are out-of-date.
- The quality of teacher assessment is poor and there is little evidence of progress, particularly between Key Stages. Where work is marked there are no targets set and pupils are not advised on how to improve. There are also no systems for assessing pupils' engagement with or progress in community activities.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory with some weaknesses

- There is a coherent programme which addresses all areas of the National Curriculum, however, some aspects of knowledge and understanding such as role of the voluntary sector, the Commonwealth and the United Nations are not given enough curriculum time.
- The wider curriculum provides for active citizenship such as primary school reading links, and 'buddying', but this is not coordinated to ensure entitlement for all.
- Where citizenship is being delivered through other subjects it is unclear whether or not citizenship objectives are being met.

Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management are inadequate.

- Insufficient improvements have been made since the last inspection in 2004 and the school's own self-evaluation indicates that it remains a priority area for development.

- Improvements have been made to classroom accommodation to enable easy access to information and communications technology and the school has appointed a subject specialist teacher.
- Subject improvement planning is weak. The school development plan does not separate citizenship from Personal Social and Health Education and most improvement targets do not relate to citizenship.
- The fact that the school recognises the need for further development in citizenship demonstrates a capacity to improve. Nevertheless, progress since the last inspection has been too slow.

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

Britain's diversity is addressed in schemes of work at both Key Stages. Pupils also look at cultures in the UK in English, geography, music and RE. There are opportunities to discuss and consider controversial issues about identity and diversity including racism, disability and homophobia. Topical issues are discussed and local issues are addressed where appropriate.

Inclusion

Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are effectively supported in citizenship lessons by teaching assistants. However, not all teachers differentiate work in lessons and some work is insufficiently challenging for more able pupils. Wider community activities are open to all pupils but lack of data about participation rates makes it difficult to monitor the take up of entitlements. There are good extra-curricular opportunities for gifted and talented pupils.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing opportunities for extended writing in citizenship commensurate with other subjects
- monitoring community involvement and providing more opportunities for pupils to take the lead in active citizenship projects
- further developing the school council
- ensuring that teaching and learning is sufficiently challenging for the more able pupils
- improving lesson planning
- developing appropriate assessment strategies
- improving leadership and management at all levels, particularly in relation to development planning.

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

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector