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Ms Helen Loughran  
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Dear Ms Loughran

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 1 and 2 October 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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness was judged to be satisfactory

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in citizenship are good.

- Students show a genuine interest in citizenship related issues, are keen to learn and many make good contributions to discussions and debate. They listen to others, express opinions well and are able to justify their views.
- Skills of enquiry and communication are good.
- Students learn much from their voluntary involvement in school and community based citizenship activities. Sustained work by the students

who sit on the Buntingford Youth Council enabled them to plan a youth survey, research and publish the findings and engage with the local MP about the recommendations.

- Similarly, long standing work with 'Amnesty' involves a large core group in campaigning on issues of inequality and injustice.
- Student progress between Key Stages 3 and 4 is insufficiently differentiated.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Subject teachers plan for and succeed in meeting many citizenship objectives in their areas. In many lessons teachers introduced and explained concepts such as exploitation, power, fair pay, philanthropy, child labour.
- Much teaching, especially teacher led questioning, supports the learning of pupils of all abilities.
- Students are accustomed to self and peer evaluation within the school. Self assessment in citizenship would be strengthened if students had a better understanding of the curriculum. Teacher assessment is underdeveloped.
- There are insufficient opportunities for pupils to write in citizenship.
- Year 12 community service is used to good effect with teachers and students evaluating the experiences well. Students were able to consider social issues arising from the various placements in health, charitable, educational or social settings. Other good examples of students learning from participation and responsible action include year 12 students opting to take on leadership roles.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- An audit has mapped National Curriculum coverage against subjects and enrichment activities. This provides an acceptable starting point but falls short of the comprehensive audit needed. As a result of this, and a lack of understanding by staff, citizenship is not yet sufficiently distinct or coherent.
- Some schemes of work and lesson plans make explicit citizenship links but the overall approach is inconsistent.
- The 'knowledge and skills' aspect of the curriculum is satisfactory and 'enquiry and communication' good. The participation and responsible action strand is strong across the school.
- Recent curricular developments are gradually bringing citizenship more centre stage, in particular through a series of day themed events. These arose in response to teacher requests to cover learning areas in more detail including business and enterprise, fair trade and global poverty. Students and staff have responded to these activities well.

## Leadership and management of citizenship

### Leadership and management are satisfactory

- Managers have noted the need for more coherence in the delivery of citizenship but progress has been too slow thus far. Curriculum developments indicate a willingness to introduce greater flexibility in the timetable to enable coverage of citizenship topics.
- Curriculum leadership is satisfactory. The co-ordinator has built on the previous 'learning for life' programme, encouraged curriculum areas to accommodate citizenship to a degree and introduced some relevant developments. However, overall there is limited subject specific specialist knowledge.
- Staff development has been insufficient to enable teachers to fully understand the programme of study and implement a cross curricular approach.
- Debate and discussion on controversial issues is encouraged by managers with, for example, relative poverty, culture and race readily tackled.
- The school's partner middle schools are due to take over the delivery of Key Stage 3 and managers are mindful of the opportunity this presents to improve progression and coherence in the citizenship curriculum.

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

Students debate freely, with the more able more readily inclined to engage in issues. Teachers have a generally good level of awareness about diversity but with some more adept than others at creating topical links in their teaching, so enabling students to consider diversity and its impact. History and General Studies both succeeded in this respect. A day event on the theme of culture encouraged a good response. The school has made good use of provocative outside speakers to fire debate and discussion. Students are keen to consider wider diversity issues including sexuality.

### Inclusion

The school ethos is demonstrably inclusive. Teachers take good account of the different abilities of students and draw on a variety of teaching styles; visual, reflective and group centred. Enrichment activities involve a good cross section of students and the school council structure enables broad representation by young people.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- taking steps to increase staff understanding of the citizenship programme of study
- developing student assessment
- increasing opportunities for writing in citizenship

- introducing professional development and where possible linking it to the areas of good teaching practice which exist.

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

Tony Gallagher  
Her Majesty's Inspector