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16 November 2007

Mr P Nation
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Nation

Ofsted survey inspection programme – citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 and 15 November 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 seven lessons and two assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- Standards are well above average in several elements of citizenship. Pupils have an excellent understanding and appreciation of the importance of rules, laws, rights and responsibilities.
- Pupils' writing is thoughtful. In religious education they produce some very mature and well considered arguments, for example on Christians' and Sikhs' views on equality. In English, they write convincing persuasive arguments, for example on whether buses should be free.

- The large school council is an effective forum for pupils' opinions and ideas to help shape the school's development. It is very good that classes have time set aside for them to discuss the issues they want to be presented to the full council and for feedback after the council has met. The council was behind the idea to invite grandparents into school lunch one day.
- Pupils have a very good understanding of what democracy means and vote to select pupils for several positions of responsibility. They appreciate that they have a vote for the local youth parliament and that they can vote for their local member of parliament when they are older.
- Pupils much enjoy debating issues and seeing both sides of an argument. They are aware of the national debate on whether 16 year-olds should have the vote and have some strong views on this!
- In personal, social, health and citizenship education (PSHCE) lessons, pupils always contribute to assessment of their work. Reports to parents meet statutory requirements well.
- Pupils are very generous raising money for charity. The school is a collection centre for the Christmas Shoebox appeal. For several weeks before Christmas, pupils in Years 6 to 8 run a Fair Trade shop.
- Pupils use the Internet confidently for research, for example into refugees using the UNHCR site or into obesity when considering healthy eating in science.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features.

- Religious education lessons are challenging and pupils are expected to think for themselves. In an interesting lesson pupils came up with imaginative ideas about what the harvest festival represents. Lower ability pupils found the intellectual demands of this lesson quite difficult but their behaviour was excellent and they persevered.
- Class teachers deliver PSHCE work very well. Excellent lessons were seen on stereotyping and writing political manifestoes for election to run an imaginary island.
- The PSHCE programme is enhanced by outside speakers. Local magistrates run excellent sessions which confront Year 8 with the reality of youth crime and the consequent punishments.
- History is sometimes taught with a good blend with citizenship. Work on Saxon invaders is used to discuss terms such as immigrants and refugees. Geography stimulates debates, for example on whether the local high street should be closed to traffic.
- Occasionally opportunities to link work with its relevance to the present day or different settings are missed.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- The separate elements of the PSHCE programme are blended well, for example linking the health issues on smoking to laws about it. The programme includes a core of citizenship topics.

- Religious education lessons contribute significantly to pupils' appreciation of moral, ethical and citizenship issues. Work on the creation is linked effectively to pollution and what humans have done to the planet. The study of key personalities, such as Martin Luther King or Mother Theresa, is skilfully interwoven with issues of race and the work of voluntary organisations such as Tear Fund. Pupils remember what they learn in this subject.
- High quality assemblies contribute significantly to pupils' citizenship education. Early in 2007, the bicentenary of the abolition of slavery was marked by a class assembly; the two seen during this visit both had strong moral content.
- In each year the English department selects texts which stimulate discussion on key citizenship issues such as racism and refugees. Year 8 pupils remember books they read in earlier years.
- In Year 5, pupils study the local area in history and geography. They carry out a litter survey in the area which they then present in graph form.
- In many subjects citizenship contributes to particular topics: the legal rights of storing data electronically in information and communication technology (ICT), sustainability in design and technology, other cultures in French, drama and music and climate change data in mathematics.
- For many years, a small group of pupils have met once a week to discuss world affairs. The school works hard to have links with overseas schools in Palestine, France and India.

Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management are outstanding

- You and the senior leadership team are very supportive of developments to strengthen the provision for citizenship and have successfully overseen its growth within the context of the school's Christian ethos.
- The chair of the governors' curriculum committee is knowledgeable about citizenship and has worked closely with the co-ordinator for several years. The school plans to integrate the UNICEF Convention on the Rights of the Child into citizenship lessons to complement the school's focus on Every Child Matters.
- The subject co-ordinator is keenly seeking out interesting and relevant resources and contacts and is fully aware of the importance of this subject.
- The religious education co-ordinator is knowledgeable about how citizenship can be woven into other subjects.
- It is commendable that pupils' views and perceptions of many aspects of school life are noted and considered for future developments.
- It is evident that liaison with the pyramid of schools promotes progression in pupils' citizenship learning, especially as they transfer into Year 9.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

- Pupils have reasonable understanding of Britain's diversity and how other parts of the UK differ from their own area.
- Assemblies are a focal point of the school day, enhanced by a programme of visiting speakers from local churches and charities. In each cycle of

assemblies there is a strong focus on racial prejudice; this has a profound impact on students' perceptions of race.

- The school acknowledges that it could increase its range of resources and displays celebrating diversity to include positive examples of different cultures and the multi-cultural population of the UK.
- The librarian and special educational needs co-ordinators take particular care to purchase books and resources which reflect the multi-cultural composition of the UK's population.

Inclusion

- The school's strong Christian ethos nurtures pupils' understanding and practice of good citizenship. Year 8 pupils enthusiastically help Year 5 pupils with reading and offer them friendship.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- use more display materials and teaching resources to support pupils' appreciation of the multi-cultural population of the UK and beyond
- encourage all teachers to link work with current and topical issues to strengthen pupils' understanding of citizenship.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Clare Gillies
Additional Inspector