

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



07 December 2007

Ms Susan O'Neill
Headteacher
Catford High School
Bellingham Road
London
SE6 2PS

Dear Ms O'Neill

Ofsted survey inspection programme – citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 and 4 December 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of ten lessons and two assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- In 2007, nearly half the students who took the short course GCSE in citizenship attained grades A*-C.
- Students have a clear understanding of democracy, rights and the law and debate such issues keenly, for example whether the voting age in the UK should be lowered.
- Through work in local forums and personal, social, health and citizenship (PSHCE) lessons, students are encouraged to debate issues in the local community, such as knife and gun crime or drugs abuse. Ten student council members have been selected to take part in a Catford Police Youth Panel.

- Students' research skills are good, especially using laptops during lessons to explore the latest news. This was seen in a very good English lesson linking styles of writing to reporting on the Bangladesh floods.
- The large school council has many vocal members. It has contributed to changes in the uniform and litter collection and to ideas for the new building. The council is regularly involved with fund raising.
- Students collect money for a range of charities. The school has achieved recognition for its contributions to a Breast Cancer charity.
- Students take on many positions of responsibility such as prefects in Years 9 and 11, peer mediators, receptionists or green wardens.
- The school participates enthusiastically in elections for the local authority's young mayor. A student was a member of the mayor's cabinet following the elections two years ago.
- During Enterprise Week students' understanding of the world of work, business and finance is strengthened.
- Students do not have secure understanding and knowledge of all types of voluntary and governmental international organisations.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Good features of citizenship lessons include the use of interactive whiteboards to stimulate learning, displaying images from the news with text and comments at the same time.
- Teaching develops students' understanding of political and social issues affecting our society including poverty, drugs and the law.
- Good teaching was seen in other subjects, for example in a GCSE science lesson debating ethical issues on gene screening of embryos, using topical and complex case studies; and in an English lesson where students debated the raising of the school leaving age and the rights and responsibilities of young adults.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- All students study the half course GCSE citizenship in Years 10 and 11 and an increasing number, just under 50% in 2007, take the examination.
- Citizenship is taught in blocks of lessons within PSHCE in Years 7 to 9. However, a limited amount of time is available to cover topics in depth. Students are more aware of the importance of this subject in Years 10 and 11.
- Assemblies regularly cover important citizenship issues, for example reflections on World Aids Day or homelessness.
- Several subjects deliver key elements of citizenship. These include poems from different cultures and books tackling controversial issues in English, and, a strong emphasis on religious tolerance and values in religious education and several important ethical issues in science.
- 'Exploring England', a unit of lessons in Year 7 geography, helps students to see the links between local and country issues. Students examine average weekly earnings by regions for example.

Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management are good.

- Your focus on using citizenship as a tool for reflection on ethical issues, to complement the school's specialism in business and enterprise, is a strength.
- It is most helpful that a governor has experience and understanding of law, politics and human rights. He takes a keen interest in the school's approach to citizenship and is fully aware of areas of provision which could be strengthened.
- The subject leader has good plans to increase the number of speakers used to extend the citizenship programme.
- The textbooks and some of the materials used are over five years old. An update of some of the resources would be useful.
- Subject leaders for most subjects, particularly science, English, drama and the humanities, are fully aware of their how their teaching contributes to understanding of citizenship.
- Audits of how subjects contribute to citizenship education provide an important oversight into overall provision and remind teachers of the importance of this subject in their work. Audits have not been carried out regularly in recent years.
- The school is already alert to sustainable issues such as recycling, lighting, heating and encouraging cycling. The new building is incorporating several other 'green' features.
- Reports to parents meet statutory requirements although students are not involved in assessing their own work enough.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

- Students reflect on their identity confidently and with reason. Reflecting the school's open approach to its multicultural profile, students willingly discuss what being British means and the difference between where a person lives and their roots. For example, one student argued that "I feel British, I'm a British citizen but I'm not British" which stimulated others to put forward their wide range of views.
- Other subjects contribute to pupils' learning about diversity. For example, in geography students draw a graph of ethnic groups in their class and compare this with information about ethnicity in London boroughs. In religious education students discuss stereotyping related to cultures, ethnicity, nationalities and discrimination. Nevertheless, they feel that they could discuss these sensitive issues more in school.
- The school celebrates Black History month enthusiastically with a range of special events and assemblies.

Inclusion

- The school recently achieved the Inclusion Quality Mark which confirms its keen determination to give all students equal opportunities.
- Support for the large number of students who do not speak English as their mother tongue is good, as is that for students with learning difficulties and disabilities. Key vocabulary is displayed in all lessons, for example 'detainees', 'asylum seekers' and 'Amnesty International'.
- In all citizenship lessons, work is planned for students' different abilities so they can contribute and tackle written work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- review more frequently the audit of cross-curricular contributions to citizenship
- review the resources for citizenship
- increase students' awareness of the citizenship topics delivered through PSHCE in Years 7 to 9.

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