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10 December 2007

Mr M Southworth
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Southworth

Ofsted survey inspection programme – citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 and 6 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 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good overall.

- Students' knowledge and understanding of key areas of the curriculum are good. They have particularly good understanding of human rights, the youth justice system and the role of local councils. They are less aware of the role of the European Union and Commonwealth, the significance of the free press, and Britain's cultural diversity.
- Lessons give students good opportunities to develop their skills of enquiry and communication. Oral communication is regularly encouraged through debates and presentations and oral contributions are formally assessed.

- There is good progress between key stages and students are able to draw well on previous knowledge. They enjoy their lessons and have a good attitude to the subject.
- Students have some opportunities to participate and take responsible action, particularly within school. The Student Council is well organised and democratic but its ambitions are quite modest.
- Students are involved in some charity fund-raising but much of this 'active citizenship' is passive in nature, for example, a sponsored silence. Other excellent community activities such as the COMMUNIK8 local youth debating forum and the Sports and Language Leadership Awards involve only a minority of students.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning of citizenship is good.

- Teachers are well trained and have expert knowledge. They use a range of active approaches which students enjoy. Information and communications technology is used in classrooms to support lessons, although interactive white boards linked to the internet are not fully utilised.
- Homework sometimes involves students researching topical issues, and those without access to the internet at home are able to use the facilities in the Learning Resource Centre.
- All teachers have received guidance on teaching controversial topics. Issues such as racism, discrimination and prejudice are debated in lessons, although students' lack of cultural awareness has an impact on how much can be achieved.
- The assessment of students' knowledge and understanding is good. Teachers have a clear understanding of how well students are achieving. Most students know what their targets are and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is comprehensive and coherent at both key stages. It is planned in great detail with good assessment opportunities throughout. There is scope to revisit topics at both key stages to develop a deeper understanding.
- Subjects such as human rights, law related education, parliament and the environment, are covered in considerable depth. Where other subjects make a contribution to the curriculum, for example, through the study of universal suffrage in history, they do so effectively.
- The school has not yet provided an entitlement for all students to engage in community activities.

Leadership and management of citizenship

The quality of leadership and management of citizenship is outstanding.

- The subject coordinator is very well-informed about the subject and dedicated to its success. The school has a clear vision for citizenship as represented in policy and development planning. This vision accords well with the Every Child Matters agenda and meets National Curriculum requirements.
- Sufficient resources have been provided in terms of staff, training and materials. There is a well equipped dedicated room for citizenship.
- The subject leader holds regular departmental meetings and effectively discharges her responsibilities. Teaching and learning is regularly monitored.
- The profile of citizenship is high in the school. There are plans to involve the local community and governors more in the future and to improve the subject profile in the school's prospectus and on the web site.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

The citizenship course includes a unit on diversity in the United Kingdom where students learn about the lives of asylum-seekers and refugees. They also explore their own understandings of 'Britishness', but the outcomes are a reflection of their own very partial awareness. Students study a range of faiths in religious education and a small minority have visited a synagogue. For the most part however, their cultural awareness is limited.

Inclusion

The citizenship curriculum is relevant and suitable for all learners. The Award Scheme Development and Accreditation Network (ASDAN) programme enables students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities to have access to effective citizenship lessons. The entitlement to discrete teaching at both key stages ensures that students access the whole curriculum, regardless of their option choices at Key Stage 4.

In some, but not all lessons, resources are differentiated to meet individual needs, and include extension activities. Sound assessment systems ensure that teachers are aware of how well students are progressing and can offer further support as required, including from teaching assistants.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing opportunities for students to participate and take responsible action within and beyond the school
- monitoring students' involvement in community activities
- improving students' awareness of Britain's cultural diversity.

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

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector