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Mr S Packer
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Dear Mr Packer

Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 and 26 February 2008 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 four lessons and a session taken by speakers from Shelter.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- The well-established School Parliament (council) received a local authority award in 2007. Students prepare thoroughly for elections, respect their voting rights and have a clear understanding of the principles of democracy.
- Parliament members contribute to local discussion groups, for example on a Gloucester Regeneration Project. Involvement with the Gloucester

Youth Movement meant that all Year 9 students contributed their ideas to a local community project.

- The charity committee works tirelessly and efficiently to organise fundraising and to raise awareness of local, national and international charities. Students give generously.
- Students prepare arguments for both sides of a topic confidently, for example on single sex education or animal rights.
- By Year 9, students understand that citizenship is about more than being a good citizen and they appreciate its relevance to their lives.
- Students understand the ways that different layers of government spend taxes on public services.
- Students have limited knowledge about the United Nations, the European Community or the Commonwealth.
- Students see 'recycling as an area that adults address'. There has been little enthusiasm for an Eco group. A small group of students is clearing an old orchard area and this may lead to greater interest.
- Year 12 students taking the GCSE in citizenship gain much from the experience but few students follow the course.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- The citizenship department uses some excellent resources, such as video clips on present-day child slavery. The impact of such powerful images requires greater time for reflection.
- In a good religious education lesson introducing Islam, Year 7 students confronted the issue of stereotyping.
- Marking of citizenship work is sometimes too complimentary. Students do not present their work carefully enough.
- Assessment procedures, especially of students' oral skills, are imaginative and thorough. Students learn to evaluate their own and each other's work well.
- A very good session on homelessness, presented by two speakers from Shelter, gave students much insight into the issues around this topic.
- At the beginning of a lesson on why laws are necessary, Year 12 students gained a good understanding of the reasons why laws have to change and evolve over time.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The detailed, personal, social and health and citizenship (PSHCE) schemes of work include all the requirements of the citizenship National Curriculum but teachers do not have enough time to cover them all.
- Religious education lessons contribute significantly to students' understanding of tolerance and different faiths and customs. One major unit of work in Year 9 focuses on laws.

- Significant contributions to citizenship exist in several other subjects, but, without a cross-subject audit, there is no overview of the strength and depth of this work.
- Focus days, such as sports day run as an international event, and units of work, for example a Year 9 history and art project on the Holocaust, contribute very well to global awareness.
- Assemblies often contain powerful citizenship messages using strong images and facts, for example on equality and global contrasts.
- Visiting speakers and theatre groups cover topics relevant to students' understanding of citizenship, for example the abolition of slavery.
- The school is successfully piloting new, citizenship related courses in the sixth form.

Leadership and management of citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory.

- You, and members of the senior leadership team, are keen to raise the profile and importance of this subject in all year groups, appreciating how this subject strengthens students' personal development.
- The department's self-evaluation of its strengths and areas for development is realistic.
- The head of citizenship's work on devising ways to assess standards in citizenship has been good. He has a number of responsibilities which limit the amount of time he can spend developing the subject.
- Members of the department regularly attend courses to keep themselves up-to-date and to find out about new resources.
- Monitoring of the depth and citizenship topics being taught in PSHCE lessons is limited. Students do not all cover the same work.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

- Students consider the diversity of Britain's population in citizenship lessons.
- The diversity of Britain's population is also discussed in religious education, history and PSHCE lessons, in poems in English and, particularly, work in drama and media. Assemblies also address diversity including topical issues such as refugees.
- Year 13 A Level drama students wrote and performed a play about identity and Britishness which was seen by many, but not all, students.

Inclusion

- Students with learning difficulties and disabilities have helpful individual education plans which guide teachers well about how to support them in citizenship lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- initiate a detailed cross-curricular audit of citizenship work delivered through other subjects and co-ordinate the good practice that exists

- monitor the depth and range of citizenship topics being covered in PSHCE lessons and the quality of marking in all years.

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 the local Learning and Skills Council and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next school inspection.

Yours sincerely

Clare Gillies
Additional Inspector