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Mr S Fenton
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Dear Mr Fenton

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 27 and 28 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 lessons, an assembly, tutorial sessions and sixth form activities.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be outstanding. The focus on educating students to be informed citizens permeates the life and work of the school.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- In all years, students' political awareness and understanding of global issues far exceeds that expected for their age. Students have an exceptional knowledge and recall of facts relevant to controversial issues. They write excellent essays presenting arguments linked to modern dilemmas.
- Students have an excellent appreciation of the link between responsibilities and rights. With numerous positions of responsibility in

the school, many students develop strong leadership skills. Sixth formers are excellent role models to younger students and to local primary school pupils.

- Each year, all tutor groups prepare and present lively assemblies, the majority of them based on topical, controversial issues.
- The growing number of students, especially sixth formers, who undertake voluntary work in the local community, is exceptional.
- The high-status charity committee is dynamic. It organises many fund-raising events for local, national and international organisations. Students participate enthusiastically and give generously.
- The effective and active school council has extended its remit to include a campaigning role, for example promoting sustainability and environmental policies.
- Students use the Internet most competently to research citizenship topics and to generate presentations.
- In Years 7 to 11, students' knowledge about the European Union, the Commonwealth and United Nations is reasonable but the least well developed part of their citizenship awareness.
- The enormous number of enrichment and extra-curricular activities and the fact that practically all students participate in at least one, means that students regularly experience team work beyond the classroom.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- In citizenship lessons, teachers effectively guide students to work independently and to organise their research sensibly.
- Teachers encourage and expect students to read newspapers and journals regularly; a wide selection is readily available in the libraries.
- The school uses local authority materials to assess students' standards and meets statutory requirements on reports for parents.
- Teachers in other subjects are fully aware of how their work contributes to citizenship, for example, making students empathise with slaves' lives to perform Blues tunes in music or linking religious education work on discrimination to specific issues in the UK.
- As students mature, teachers help them to appreciate the links between subjects and how citizenship is a thread between them. Sixth formers describe their citizenship education as 'significant but more subtle' than when they were younger.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good with outstanding features.

- The core of the citizenship programme is taught within personal, social, health and citizenship lessons (PSHCE) on a fortnightly basis. This is insufficient to give students time to probe topics at the depth which reflects their interest and ability.
- The strength in the school's citizenship provision lies in the way this core programme is augmented. In particular, students have numerous

opportunities to reflect on topical and ethical issues, from cloning in science to stereotyping in religious education.

- A significant majority of assemblies addresses citizenship issues, ranging from global ethics and fair trade to internationalism and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Students remember assemblies well.
- The charity committee regularly presents students with detailed information about the charities chosen for fund raising.
- Students who participate in trips and voluntary work in the UK and overseas share their experiences with the whole school. An art visit to Gambia has generated stimulating Year 9 work where students have to convey a key global issue.
- Sixth form general studies extend students' insight into citizenship issues extremely well; students hear from wide ranging, stimulating speakers on topics such as the political implications of bio-diversity. However, timetable arrangements limit the number of outside speakers for citizenship lessons in Years 7 to 11.
- House debating competitions, public speaking, within and outside school, and discussions in lessons are a regular part of students' experience. Younger students would welcome having more debates in lessons.

Leadership and management of citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- Your desire to give students a "secure framework of moral reference ready to make the world a better place" underpins your enthusiastic support for all aspects of citizenship provision.
- The head of department has established good schemes of work for citizenship within the PSHE programme and a small team of experienced and enthusiastic teachers. She appreciates that there is potential to develop further the valuable contributions made by other subjects.
- You support the libraries as an excellent resource for students' research in citizenship through informative displays and links to relevant websites.
- You appreciate that the status of the subject within the school's leadership and management structure needs clarification.
- Middle managers are increasingly aware of the significant role they play in generating students' breadth of insight into citizenship topics.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

- Students describe how lessons in citizenship and many other subjects often address issues related to multicultural Britain.
- Students enjoyed a recent assembly on national anthems and found it thought provoking.
- In both religious education and English in Year 7, students consider their own identity linked to the community and beyond.
- Year 11 produce collages depicting their impressions of Britishness which they have to justify and explain to their class. They complete one of the online British citizenship questionnaires first.

- In a very good English lesson on poems describing 'outsiders', students used blog comments from a radio website to stimulate discussion about the attitudes to immigration of some UK residents.

Inclusion

- The Every Child Matters agenda underpins the work of the citizenship department.
- Students with exceptional gifts and talents in citizenship are encouraged to reach their full potential and given stimulating enrichment.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- strengthen your plans to increase the amount of time for discrete citizenship teaching and focus days, to extend students' insight and appreciation of the work and to match their intellectual abilities
- consider the role of the subject within the school's leadership and management structure.

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