

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr H Lay  
Headteacher  
Samuel Ward Arts and Technology College  
Chalkstone Way  
Haverhill  
Suffolk  
CB9 0LD

Dear Mr Lay

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 21 and 22 May 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 various lessons and activities.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Young people display a positive attitude and approach across all aspects of the citizenship curriculum. They have good skills of enquiry and communication, reflect well on issues raised in class, substantiate their views and give well considered and thoughtful responses to issues such as prejudice, poverty and wealth.
- Students have a good knowledge of the criminal justice system, democratic structures and public finances.

- Many participate in enrichment and community based activities from which they learn about democratic structures and decision making. Students linked with school council activities make an impressive contribution to aspects of school life including teacher selection. They are working alongside staff to implement classroom observation.
- Students retain learning from previous lessons well; their progression is evident across years and key stages.

### Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

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

- In the best examples teachers subtly differentiate their approaches to suit the needs of all abilities. They set appropriate individual tasks and direct their line of questioning to both challenge and support students.
- Teachers tackle sensitive and controversial issues well and in a consistent manner. The best teaching often invoked an emotional response from students, particularly in relation to human rights. Teachers sought students' personal views and opinions enabling them to modify their stand point in the light of new information or through discussion. Such an approach was underpinned by accurate information.
- In the few weaker lessons, teachers failed to explain concepts or classroom tasks sufficiently well.
- The amount of written work undertaken by students is good as is its general quality. More scope exists however for individual writing which draws on their own research.
- Citizenship teaching and learning is strengthened by its cross-curricular structure with teachers from allied subject subscribing fully to its principles and approaches. Many teachers build specific citizenship objectives into their lesson planning to good effect.
- Currently reports to parents include a grade on attitude and effort but processes are in place to utilise the new 8 level grade for 08-09. Work to ensure this happens is secure with the grading system being informed by all subjects delivering citizenship education.
- Inclusion is good. The school council has a broad range of students and highly effective teaching involves students of varying abilities. Students with learning difficulties and disabilities are well integrated into student life. In-class student support is subtle and well managed.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The model of delivery is coherent and understood by staff and students. The pattern of discrete lessons in Years 9 and 10 is strengthened by the contribution of other host subjects and by 'de-timetabled days'. Forward-looking plans are in place for a cross-curricular day on the theme of migration.
- The three strands of enquiry, knowledge and participation are considered in equal measure.

- Most departments have a citizenship policy in place and all have carried out a citizenship audit. In the best, departments have addressed specifically and in some detail the common and shared curricular aspects of the subject. In others the linkages are more cursory.
- In aspects of the overall curriculum, particularly tutorials, citizenship planning fails to make clear how activities such as careers and vocational guidance and work experience differ from citizenship education.
- There are good but less obvious contributions to the curriculum with, for example, 24 hour news being broadcast in many of the school common areas.

## Leadership and management of citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- Senior managers have articulated a clear ethos and value for citizenship broadly across the school. They encourage good engagement by staff and students in a rich range of community activities and take a critical approach to, for example, the need to address students' political literacy on entry to the school.
- A comprehensive externally run parent survey is carried out and sets helpful benchmarks for subjects. Parental responses in respect of citizenship education suggest that the subject lacks visibility, an issue which the school is tackling.
- Assessment of the quality of the citizenship programme by senior managers is accurate and to the point. A departmental self assessment is also in place as is an action plan. The latter will benefit from clearer priorities.
- Classroom observations are carried out by managers and the local authority. These assist staff in bringing about improvement.
- The school generally has robust systems for assessment, monitoring and target setting. Such expertise is beginning to be employed in citizenship.
- Staff development is underdeveloped, albeit that training opportunities provided to schools by the local authority have been cancelled due to poor take-up.
- The capacity for achievement to improve is good.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

School leaders and staff demonstrate a very good level of awareness about diversity. They have acted on their concerns about levels of political literacy among students on entry and within the local community and work collectively to raise awareness at whole school level as well as in the class. Some of the lessons seen tackled prejudice very effectively and enabled students to understand its roots and causes. As students progress through school they become more able to engage with some of the more challenging concepts in relation to diversity in Britain. A few curriculum resources however in respect of Britishness are insufficiently challenging of students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- strengthening teachers understanding of the citizenship programme of study and its relationship with other allied subjects
- providing further curriculum support through training, mentoring and networking
- embedding assessment arrangements.

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

Tony Gallagher  
Her Majesty's Inspector