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Mr C Bohills
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Dear Mr Bohills

Ofsted 2008-09 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 23 and 24 September 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 the assessment of students' achievements.

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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall, but inadequate in some respects.

- Students have satisfactory knowledge and understanding of key areas of the citizenship curriculum. Some aspects of the curriculum such as human rights and the criminal justice system are revisited across the key stages, enabling progression.
- Students' skills in enquiry, communication and critical thinking are underdeveloped because lessons provide too few opportunities for independent learning, creativity and challenge. Work in citizenship is

not commensurate with work in other subjects; it is only in GCSE coursework that students produce sustained pieces of writing.

- Students are encouraged to be active citizens. Some are involved in charity fund-raising through musical or dance performances in the community; others raise money as part of whole school or year group events. However, students do not fully develop their skills in taking responsible action because many projects are initiated by teachers rather than students and are not linked to the citizenship curriculum. Furthermore, the school does not formally monitor activities to ascertain which students are taking part.
- Students have some opportunities to develop their skills in advocacy and representation through the student council but these are diminished because the council does not fully represent democratic processes; the meetings are infrequent and teacher-led; students have little ownership of the council and a poor opinion of its effectiveness.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall, although some is inadequate.

- Students engage well in the lessons where tasks are relevant and teachers demonstrate expertise and enthusiasm. However, lessons are often uninspiring and teachers have insufficient subject knowledge to respond to students' questions or challenge their thinking. In too many lessons, students become disinterested and disengaged; expectations of what students can achieve are too low; and the needs of the most able are not met.
- Teachers use a limited range of approaches in lessons. Much is worksheet or book based, particularly at Key Stage 4 where students reported that they mostly copy from textbooks. Information and communication technology (ICT) is not used sufficiently well in lessons to introduce current affairs, explore issues in depth or make lessons interesting.
- Marking in books is inconsistent. Some students receive encouraging comments, although teachers are over-generous in their praise of mediocre work. Many students reported that their books are rarely marked. Boys in particular take very little pride in their work, much of which is unfinished and illegible.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are better served in citizenship lessons than their peers. Classes are set according to ability and work is usually matched to their needs. Vulnerable students and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities benefit from the support, encouragement and skilful questioning of teaching assistants.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Citizenship is taught as a discrete subject at both key stages for one hour per week. All statutory requirements are met. All pupils at Key Stage 4 are entered for the GCSE short course in citizenship studies.

- The programme is well-considered and coherent. There is a good range of relevant topics, although opportunities are lost to link them to the active citizenship that pupils engage in beyond the classroom.

Leadership and management of citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory.

- The school has a vision for citizenship which accords with the National Curriculum programme of study and the wider school ethos. The subject is being temporarily led by a religious studies/personal, social and health education (PSHE) teacher until the newly appointed subject leader arrives in January 2009.
- Adequate resources have been provided in terms of subject time and materials. Staffing is constrained by whole school staffing issues; other subjects often take priority, resulting in a lack of subject expertise in the citizenship department. Some staff have received citizenship training in the form of day courses but this is insufficient to meet the needs of the department. Citizenship does not have a dedicated teaching area in the school and lessons are often taught in unsuitable spaces.
- The subject development plan is good. It includes updated schemes of work and the introduction of assessment levels in the light of recent curriculum changes. The school's internal review of citizenship in June 2007 accurately identified a number of areas for development. Currently there is no effective monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in citizenship. However, there is good capacity to improve following the appointment of a specialist subject leader.

Subject issue: the assessment of students' achievements

- The school has a new assessment policy based on the 8 level scale. This is being introduced at Key Stage 3 and levels have been rewritten to help pupils understand them. Current assessment of learning is inadequate. In lessons teachers fail to use questioning to effectively ascertain levels of understanding. Marking is inconsistent and students do not know what to do to improve.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- the quality of teaching and learning, in particular teachers' subject knowledge and pedagogy
- effective use of ICT
- assessment
- monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
- monitoring and evaluation of active citizenship.

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