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Mr N Fleming  
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Dear Mr Fleming

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 30 September and 1 October 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 good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Students have good knowledge and understanding of most key areas of the curriculum. Their understandings of human rights and responsibilities; the environment; morals and ethics; the criminal justice system; the media; identity and diversity are particularly strong. They have much less awareness of the functioning of the economy or local and parliamentary democracy.
- Students have very good skills of enquiry and communication. They are encouraged to research topics and present their findings and opinions. They develop critical thinking skills through tackling complex social and moral dilemmas such as euthanasia and homelessness. The quality of

some students' work, particularly about slavery and the Holocaust is outstanding.

- Students use information and communication technology (ICT) well and take great pride in the multi-media presentation of their work.
- Students are given opportunities to take leadership roles in citizenship contexts. Student council members organise a number of fund-raising events for charity and a regular Christmas party for the elderly. However, selection onto the council does not reflect democratic processes and not all students in the school are aware of its work.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development in citizenship and much is delivered across other subjects, it is therefore difficult to identify students' progress within and between key stages.

### Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers use a range of approaches, including class discussion, group work and games. In the best lessons students are encouraged to be empathetic and considered in their response to complex moral and ethical questions. Students engage well with the lessons and enjoy contributing to discussions. However, activities sometimes lack challenge and not all debates are sufficiently well informed.
- Teachers have a good understanding of how to deal with sensitive and controversial issues such as capital punishment and racism. They use topical issues effectively to illustrate key issues. A good example of this is an assembly on the Holocaust which made direct reference to the discrimination suffered by local Gypsies.
- Teachers use interactive whiteboards to add pace and interest to lessons and explore how the internet can be used as a research tool; students in Years 12 and 13 reported how they watch and discuss coverage of the news during form time.
- Citizenship is taught within the humanities department and because the school does not deploy teaching assistants for humanities lessons, students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities do not receive the same levels of support as in the core subjects.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities who are working in the learning support unit receive very good support in developing their knowledge, understanding and skills in citizenship.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Areas of the curriculum such as Britain's diversity; rights and responsibilities; the environment; the roles of the media and voluntary services are well covered. Other key areas such as politics and economics are more 'light touch' and not taught across both key stages.
- Some key issues are addressed in assemblies and through excellent out-of-school activities such as visits to a court and prison; conferences on diversity and community cohesion; and trips to Poland and Belgium

to visit concentration camps and war graves. To this extent the programme contains much that is good and outstanding, but it is not as coherent and comprehensive as it should be and does not ensure access to the National Curriculum programme of study for all students.

- All students undertake the COPE accreditation from Years 9 to 13 and the school helps to fund citizenship related extra-curricular activities, ensuring equality of access to most aspects of the citizenship programme.

## Leadership and management of citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory.

- The school has provided sufficient time for citizenship in all years except Year 8. Material resources are good; ICT is used particularly effectively; and the school funds students to attend a wide range of relevant out-of-school events. The funding for subject specific training for teachers is however, inadequate.
- There is not an explicit vision for citizenship represented in policy and development planning. Monitoring and evaluation is not specific to citizenship and consequently does not inform planning for improvement. The distinction between citizenship and other humanities subjects is blurred, resulting in gaps in provision.

Subject issue: the assessment of students' achievements.

- Citizenship aspects of the ASDAN Certificate of Personal Effectiveness (COPE) are assessed and there are some well assessed pieces of work in Key Stage 3 which are marked against the new 8 level scale. However, the school is at the early stages of assessing learning in citizenship and where citizenship is taught through other subjects it is rarely assessed against citizenship criteria.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- students' knowledge and understanding of economic and democratic processes
- the quality of subject self-evaluation and development planning
- subject specific training for citizenship teachers.

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