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06 October 2008

Mr M Griffiths
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Dear Mr Griffiths

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 citizenship, the visit had a particular focus on assessment.

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, scrutiny of relevant documentation and reports, analysis of students' work, observation of part of six lessons, two pre-school sessions, two assemblies and meetings with two groups of students.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good with many outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Students' knowledge and understanding of key areas of the citizenship curriculum are good. In particular, they demonstrate good knowledge of the law, politics and human rights and responsibilities.
- Students show good skills in enquiry and communication and enjoy the opportunities for critical thinking. They appreciate that they have a voice in the subject and enjoy sharing opinions and debating issues in their citizenship and guidance lessons.

- Analysis of students' exercise books indicates some variety in teachers' expectations of written work. Establishing and implementing this more consistently would help tutors when checking on students' progress and their understanding of the subject's key concepts.
- The school's commitment to develop the use of the student voice and promote active citizenship is outstanding. The current plan to engage a greater number of students through the house system and provide further leadership opportunities is potentially powerful, as this aspect of the school's work is already highly successful.
- Many students actively promote citizenship within the school community and beyond in assuming responsibility for leading, supporting and encouraging other students in a vast range of school and community activities.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- At its best subject teaching is lively and energetic, with teachers demonstrating confidence in handling the subject material and engaging students in thoughtful debates through the use of stimulating, relevant materials. These inspire enthusiasm from students and create an awareness of the importance of the subject matter.
- Lessons are generally well planned and learning objectives are clear. When tutors appear less confident with the subject content, students' perceptions are that class discussions are less successful and there is greater reliance on the course text for stimulus to the lesson. The most successful teachers incorporate topical issues of interest or concern and make the subject 'real' for students. Here the use of information communication technology (ICT) enriches teaching and learning.
- Controversial issues are sensitively handled by most teachers; students express their thoughts with maturity and respect for others' viewpoints. In one lesson, for example, the issues around multiple identities and the diversity in Britain today were skilfully explored by a Year 7 class with insight and empathy for the feelings of others.
- Relationships between staff and students are positive and mutually respectful. The use of form tutors to deliver the citizenship programme is planned to maximise the learning potential from this close working relationship and their detailed knowledge of individual needs. Consequently, students feel comfortable in discussing various issues in a safe environment and appreciate their good relationships with tutors. One Year 9 student commented, 'School isn't just a place where you come and learn, you grow and develop as a person too, so it's good to be doing citizenship in forms'.
- The curriculum is inclusive and those with a range of learning difficulties and/or disabilities are sensitively supported to enable their full participation in lessons. Excellent careers guidance supports students well at times of transition and ensures a smooth progression to the next stage of their education or training.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good with some outstanding features.

- The scheme of work for both key stages is sound and meets requirements. It is coherent and enables progression in the key concepts through application of the subject processes as students mature. Lesson plans are in place for each unit of the course.
- Resources are provided for each lesson to ensure consistency. The subject text is used heavily as the starting stimulus for lessons. This is complemented well by additional resources in some lessons, including good use of ICT at times, but this is inconsistent across all classes.
- Good contributions are made to citizenship by a wide range of subjects. These are carefully mapped in detail in some subjects, for example in RE, however the audit requires updating to ensure that all contributions are recognised and included in the overall scheme of work. Some of the work across the curriculum is of a high quality, for example in a Year 10 English lesson when students explored social responsibility and taking positive action through the medium of a poem.
- Links with a range of external agencies and partners are extensive. Visiting speakers and external contributors to the curriculum at key points further students' understanding and awareness of wider community issues and their responsibilities within these.
- The enrichment programme adds significantly to the citizenship curriculum. Enterprise activities and an extensive range of residential trips across the globe enrich students' experiences and extend their skills in organisation, planning and decision making. Students are encouraged to make contributions beyond their school-the building and refurbishment work completed by students each year in a community in Malawi is an example of this commitment.
- The contribution of the school's vast extra-curricular programme to citizenship is outstanding. The huge array of activities available provides many meaningful opportunities for students to assume responsibility, demonstrate leadership and support others. This is evident in sports, drama, music, expressive arts and other activities. Students support younger boys as mentors, prefects, and sports leaders, amongst other options, with the value of community service and responsible action both recognised and celebrated. Students themselves recognise the benefits. The comment, 'We have a stake in the school and it is a way of giving something back as we have gained so much,' exemplifies the views of many sixth formers on the value of active citizenship.
- The sixth form programme for citizenship is outstanding. Through the A level General Studies course, studied by all students and the discrete citizenship and guidance programme, students experience a rich, diverse curriculum that prepares them well for life beyond school. Their extra-curricular experiences, including the residential trip in Year 12 enhance this through many practical applications of citizenship in action.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- Members of the senior leadership team have a clear vision for the subject. The value of active participation as role models and citizens of the school and community is central to the school's ethos and expectations of students. Service to the school and community is encouraged, recognised and celebrated. Consequently, this message resonates with students, many of whom give their time generously to school activities in developing their leadership skills.
- Coordination of the subject is good; a sound start has been made in drawing up the schemes of work for each year group. The Year Team Leader with responsibility for citizenship is clear about the requirements for the subject and has ensured that the programmes for both PSE and citizenship are covered equally within the curriculum time available.
- There is clear understanding of the revised curriculum in Year 7; the new requirements have been mapped against the current programme with various developments underway.
- Monitoring and evaluation of the subject is completed by the Year Team Leaders for each year group. This has the potential to raise further the status of the subject and promote greater consistency in terms of the quality of teaching and learning across each year group.

Subject issue: assessment

- Assessment in the subject is satisfactory. Objectives are defined for each lesson and students' work and progress in the subject is monitored and recorded by tutors, although this has so far been fairly informal and narrowly based.
- Reports to parents are informative and provide clear information about the subject content and their child's understanding and participation in lessons.
- The school understands the new assessment requirements and is considering the implications of an eight level scale. Development work to ensure consistency across classes is planned.
- Self and peer assessment are used well in some lessons to good effect but this does not routinely occur.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the range and variety of lesson resources available for tutors' use, particularly the use of ICT when appropriate
- ensuring that contributions to the subject from all curriculum areas are mapped and included in the scheme of work
- developing the use and frequency of self and peer assessment in the current review of assessment procedures.

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

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector