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10 October 2008

Mr A Wellman  
Acting Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Wellman

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 7 and 8 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 and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of twelve half lessons, two tutor sessions and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- By the end of Year 11, students have an above average level of knowledge and understanding of most elements of citizenship, for example democracy and justice.
- Students understand the link between rights and responsibilities. Many of them, particularly sixth formers, take on positions of responsibility in school. A large number of sixth formers undertake voluntary work in the community.
- Sixth form students are mature, thoughtful and fully aware of the importance of citizenship and the impact it has on their lives.

- Students often debate topical and controversial issues and they appreciate the importance of seeing both sides of an argument. They participate in public speaking competitions and benefit from hearing well-known public figures giving lectures at the school.
- The school council is an effective forum for students to express their views; sixth formers lead research into particular issues they wish to consider. All students research citizenship topics intelligently, mainly using the Internet, in lessons and for homework.
- Students fund raise enthusiastically and show enterprise and originality in the ways they do this. For example, on more than one occasion, when a student has been seriously ill, others have collected money for a linked medical research organisation.
- Not only do students know what they should do to lead healthy lifestyles but they understand the link between people's behaviour and its impact on society, for example drink driving and the pressures it puts on the health service.
- The multicultural population of the school community is celebrated; students discuss 'Britishness' confidently and respect each others' faiths and cultures.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- With over 20 teachers delivering citizenship through the school's 'Social Education' programme in Years 9 to 11, the quality of teaching is variable; most is good with lessons proceeding at a good pace.
- In the most successful lessons, resources are topical and stimulating. For example, a good lesson on Fair Trade was enlivened by having many products on display for students to examine.
- Teaching in a Year 9 geography lesson with a strong citizenship focus was good. Students learned about local crime patterns by studying newspaper articles and then plotted the occurrence of different types of crime on a map of Maidenhead. They watched well-chosen video extracts about how to reduce crime through architecture and urban planning.
- Teachers do not always present students with detailed enough information and occasionally lessons lack a variety of learning styles when they involve worksheets and writing.
- When students are asked to discuss topics they respond very well, although teachers need to ensure that all of them contribute.
- Teachers occasionally miss opportunities to help students to see the links between their own lives and the wider world, for example, comparing 'rights' in the UK with those found in other countries.
- In tutor time, students occasionally discuss news items. The quality of teaching and learning in these sessions varies, depending on the individual tutor's interest in citizenship.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory with many good features.

- The citizenship content of the Social Education programme is well established in Years 9 to 11 and covers all key elements of the subject. The off-timetable sessions introduced for Year 7 (and planned for Year 8), have the potential to strengthen the profile of this subject.
- The discrete citizenship sessions for Year 7 students are well structured under three major themes: My Community, the Wider Community and the Global Community. In the summer term, students' work will tie in with the strong and well-established links with a school in Zambia.
- Citizenship is addressed well in most other subjects of the curriculum, especially the humanities. For example, in a stimulating history lesson, Year 7 students realised that the composition of the UK's population has been shaped by immigration over numerous centuries.
- Occasionally citizenship teachers are unaware of how their work ties in with other subjects and assembly themes, for example Fair Trade which is also discussed in geography.
- Assemblies, linked to the 'Thought for the week', often relate to citizenship themes. Such topics include 'Building Bridges' or 'Being a Good Citizen'.
- As one of two secondary schools in the local authority chosen to focus on reducing carbon footprint, you are now in a position to extend students' understanding and action about sustainability.
- The sixth form enrichment programme includes some important citizenship sessions. Students find the politics and finance lessons particularly stimulating.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- You are keen to see the subject develop further and you support the line manager and subject leader for citizenship well.
- Your self- evaluation of the subject's strengths and areas for improvement is astute, accurate and reflective. This is also true of the development plan which mirrors the areas for improvement listed at the end of this letter.
- During the last academic year, the subject leader noted that the overall effectiveness of your provision for citizenship was satisfactory. Since then you have introduced better provision in Year 7 for this year and for Year 8 in September 2009.
- The subject leader is keen to extend her understanding of this subject, for example carrying out research into students' perceptions of end of year assessments as part of her study for an MA.
- You ensure that the team of teachers delivering citizenship has some time to learn from the subject coordinator and to share good practice. Nevertheless, you agree that it would be preferable to have a smaller team delivering citizenship.

## Subject issue: assessment

- Your reports to parents include detailed and informative comments about citizenship. They mention how well students debate and

participate as well as describing their understanding of the topics covered during the year.

- For the new National Curriculum levels, the subject co-ordinator has prepared helpful descriptors in student friendly language. Year 7 students and their teachers will use these to assess their levels at the end of term.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- considering ways to reduce the number of teachers in the citizenship team and how to give them more time to share good practice and resources
- generating more coherence in the delivery of citizenship by reviewing where there is overlap and/or repetition across all subjects of the curriculum
- developing further the curriculum developments in Years 7 and 8 to enrich students' experience of citizenship in these years.

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

Clare Gillies  
Additional Inspector