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Mr R Parrish
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Dear Mr Parrish

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 10 and 11 November 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons, two assemblies, a tour of the Year 8 option lessons and a visit to a local infant school to observe the Junior Sports Leaders Award students.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Students have a very good understanding of rights and responsibilities and the importance of belonging to a community.
- Sixth form students are articulate, confident and thoughtful and well prepared to be considerate citizens when they leave school.
- Students have a good knowledge about the basics of democracy. The elected school and sixth form councils are active and meet regularly. All students voted on-line for the local authority Youth Parliament.

- Some members of the council have joined staff working groups, for example on assemblies. The school council's themes for Year 11 house captains to discuss include the community in action and mentoring in life.
- Students enthusiastically take on positions of leadership and responsibility, for example mentors, prefects, sports leaders and captains and many other roles. Sixth formers often help younger ones.
- Students participate enthusiastically when debating topical and controversial issues; they listen and evaluate different viewpoints respectfully.
- Many topics are well linked to national and local issues such as the impact of vandalism or knife crime.
- Students are sensitive to the needs of others and give very generously to several charities.
- Students relate well to each other and appreciation of diversity permeates the school's ethos and contributes to its inclusive Christian community.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of sustainability issues are satisfactory but you acknowledge that this is an area for development in the future.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Students in Year 11 grasped the key differences between the electoral systems in the UK and USA in an outstanding lesson where the teacher used the interactive whiteboard very effectively. His detailed knowledge of the topic stimulated students' interest.
- In a lively Year 9 citizenship lesson on privacy and the press, the teacher's skilful questions made students consider how this issue could impact on their futures. It was very effective asking students to write their own code of conduct for the press.
- In a Year 9 lesson, powerful images of what it means to be a 'War Child' extended Year 9 students' awareness of the impact wars have on children's education, health and futures.
- Religious education teachers deliver elements of the citizenship curriculum confidently and lead discussions on ethical issues with expertise. In an effective Year 11 lesson on abortion, the teacher steered the debate sensitively and students responded with maturity.
- None of the teachers who deliver citizenship within the personal and social development lessons are specialists but they prepare lessons carefully and use resources effectively.
- In some subjects teachers regularly emphasise how topics are related to citizenship but in others they do not relate work enough to students' own lives and what is happening in the wider world.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The changes introduced in the last two years have improved the provision for citizenship considerably. In the past, too little time was given to this subject.
- The religious education curriculum tackles many citizenship issues well, particularly the impact of religious beliefs and actions on society.
- As citizenship in Years 7 to 11 is delivered within the personal development course, not all elements are studied in depth although the requirements of the National Curriculum are met.
- The introduction of the short course GCSE in Years 9 and 10 is motivating students well.
- Sixth formers appreciate hearing speakers on topics such as driving safety and its impact on society, advertising, trafficking or the work of a magistrate.
- Students confidently debate their faith and that of others but insufficient time is given to the study of other aspects of Britain's diversity.
- Many topics are covered well in other subjects and students particularly appreciate the links between citizenship and English, geography, history and religious studies particularly clearly.
- Students value and remember outside speakers, particularly presentations made by the police, for example on the impact of theft or alcohol abuse on the community and girls' safety.
- Assemblies address many citizenship topics. During the visit there were thought provoking Remembrance Day assemblies which raised important questions about history and citizenship.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- You are keen to see citizenship develop and have supported the improvements introduced in the last two years. You carefully consider the best way for students to understand the coherence of the subject within the curriculum, in a Christian school.
- The subject leader promotes the subject well and has been the key person to introduce the GCSE course and more time for the subject. She belongs to a useful local group and national organisations for citizenship and is knowledgeable about where to find interesting resources.
- A governor has given the school a stimulating pack which helps students to consider the sustainable issues involved in schools and their sites. Extension of the pilot of this programme will help to raise the profile of sustainability in the school.
- The subject leader has several other roles and needs more time to focus on developing citizenship and supporting the teachers who deliver it.
- It has been a wise move to have greater stability and fewer teachers in the staff team delivering citizenship.

Subject issue: assessment

- At the end of each unit of work, students' knowledge and understanding is checked by a short questionnaire on the topic's major concepts.
- At the end of each year, students evaluate what they have learned about the citizenship topics they have studied. They also assess how well they contribute to discussions and work in groups and teams.
- In the past, Year 9 students have received a report summarising whether they are working towards, at or below the expected level in citizenship. The school is preparing to use the new National Curriculum levels to assess and report standards for Year 7.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- train all staff to stress the relevance of their work to students' lives, current events and their futures
- continue to raise the profile of the subject in Years 7 and 8
- extend students' understanding and knowledge about sustainability issues, especially in how they live in school
- Review the roles and responsibilities connected with citizenship to further the work of the subject leader.

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/local Learning and Skills Council 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