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Dear Mr Heitzman

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 9 and 10 December 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of six lessons, a student council meeting and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory overall.

- Students have a generally good understanding of human rights and responsibilities, global interdependence and environmental issues. They have insufficient knowledge and understanding in the areas of local and parliamentary democracy, the criminal justice system, political and electoral systems, the functioning of the economy and the European Union.
- Students have opportunities to develop good critical thinking and enquiry skills through citizenship work within religious education (RE), science, information and communication technology (ICT) and English

where they research and debate a range of topical and controversial issues such as homelessness, the smoking ban and euthanasia. Students take advantage of good access to ICT facilities and a well-stocked citizenship library to help them with their research.

- Those who represent the school on the Student Council develop skills of advocacy and representation. The election of the council fully reflects democratic procedures and some members have the opportunity to represent their school on the local and national Youth Parliaments. The Council is very well organised and representatives take their responsibilities very seriously. The achievements and ambitions of the Council are however rather modest.
- Many students participate and take responsible action through the Duke of Edinburgh and Junior Sports Leadership awards and through charity fund-raising. The Duke of Edinburgh award in particular, allows students to investigate, take innovative action and evaluate impact in citizenship contexts. This contributes to their good personal development.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Students engage well with the lessons and enjoy the opportunities they have to research, discuss and debate topical issues. Their attitude toward citizenship is generally good although their depth of understanding is inconsistent. This is because much of the teaching is through other subjects and teachers do not demonstrate expert knowledge of how to deliver the citizenship objectives nor how to respond in depth and detail to students' questions.
- Teachers demonstrate a range of approaches to teaching including group work and effective use of ICT. In citizenship within science, RE and English, teachers demonstrate that they understand well how to deal with sensitive and controversial issues.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by learning support assistants.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall although some areas are inadequate.

- Citizenship within the personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) programme covers only a small area of the curriculum and the time allocation of 40 minutes every two weeks for PSHEE is insufficient. Other aspects of the programme are delivered through other subjects, but the effectiveness of this varies as some departments have not understood what is required.
- The programme is strongest on legal and human rights, some aspects of the voluntary sector and global interdependence. At both key stages there is little teaching on parliamentary democracy, government and the courts, how the economy functions, the role of financial services or the role of a free press. At Key Stage 4 there is limited entitlement to

the full programme of study as much of the delivery relies on students taking the appropriate options such as business studies or geography.

- Extra curricular activities play a very big part in supporting students' knowledge, understanding and skills in citizenship. The Student Council is democratically elected and some students learn about local government in the context of the work of the Council. Trips, assemblies and activities such as a mock trial at the magistrates' court, visits to the slavery museum and Auschwitz provide excellent learning opportunities for some students. However, they are not available to all and students' engagement in these activities is not formally monitored to ensure their curriculum entitlement is met. There are some valuable focus days on citizenship issues, for example, 'One World Week' but these are not part of the assessed programme of learning.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The school has a vision for citizenship which emphasises the school's aim to encourage students to become active and engaged citizens who make a positive contribution to the school and their community. In this respect the citizenship provision is very successful. The vision accords less well with the National Curriculum requirement to develop knowledgeable and informed citizens.
- Material resources for citizenship are adequate but resources are insufficient in terms of dedicated curriculum time, management time and staff training. The subject leader has the responsibility to lead a very large team of non-specialist teachers. She uses year tutor meetings to share curriculum materials but does not have dedicated team meetings for programme development and the sharing of good practice, nor opportunities to monitor and evaluate teaching and learning in citizenship. Neither the subject leader nor deputy subject leader have received subject specific training in citizenship.
- The leadership has a realistic view of the strengths and weaknesses of the subject and good capacity to improve.

Subject issue: assessment

- Teachers have some understanding of how well students are doing but assessment is rarely specific enough to ensure that students know what they need to do to improve. Assessments are not used to target areas of weakness for remedial intervention or to inform improvement planning.
- Some helpful reporting to parents takes place at the end of Key Stage 3 and in form tutor reports.
- The school has plans to introduce the new 8 level assessment scale but progress is at a very early stage of development.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring the curriculum covers all key areas of the programme of study so that students receive their curriculum entitlement at both key stages

- assessing standards and progress in citizenship
- introducing monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in 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