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05 December 2008

Mr T Molloy
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Dear Mr Molloy

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 1 and 2 December 2008 to look at work in citizenship.

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 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

- Achievement and standards are good overall, but with strengths in aspects of the programme of study in Key Stage 3 and particularly in the sixth form in participation and responsible action, which for many students is outstanding. Key stage 4 is an area of relative weakness.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of citizenship are patchy. They are generally good at discussing topical issues and can draw on their knowledge of topics such as rights and responsibilities and UK diversity. They have insufficient opportunity to probe topics in depth and write a length. Some have very good experience of participation and responsible action.
- Achievement in particular lessons and activities was very good. Students showed the ability to grasp difficult concepts and articulate

arguments for and against a proposition. Some have completed outstanding work, for example as projects for Black History month.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The quality of teaching observed was good overall.
- An example of outstanding teaching was seen in a history and citizenship lesson on the theme of democracy and dictatorship, reinforcing and extending historical knowledge and understanding in the context of campaigning on a contentious current political issue.
- General features of lessons in which citizenship was taught through other subjects included the strong subject expertise of the teacher, the very good relationships with students, the range of activities, their inclusiveness and the generally good level of challenge. Good use was made of ICT for teaching.
- In some cases teachers demonstrated good pedagogic skills but the tasks did not meet citizenship objectives as well as they might.
- Evidence from files and students interviewed confirms the school's view that the quality of core citizenship teaching on the part of tutors is uneven. In some cases the dependence on worksheets and unchallenging tasks depresses achievement. In some classes the use of files has been suspended so no comment can be made on recent written work.
- Key Stage 3 and sixth form students were far more positive about their lessons than students in Key Stage 4. Generally, however, students showed interest and engagement in their work. One student observed 'it is cool to learn at this school'; this was manifested in all of the lessons observed.
- A system has been set in place to assess students' achievement. A self assessment sheet was broadly valued by students although they did not have an overview of how well they are doing in citizenship.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good overall.

- The core Key Stage 3 curriculum, supplemented by modules taught by subject departments, is good in range and in depth in some aspects. The Key Stage 4 curriculum is relatively weaker, as identified by the school. A comprehensive programme of citizenship is provided for post-16 students and is valued by them, as well as the opportunity to take on responsibility in the school and community.
- The involvement of subject departments in citizenship is entirely in the spirit of the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum and it is unusual to see so many subjects contributing directly to a core citizenship programme.
- This is done to different effect by different departments. Thus for example history, geography and science topics address issues of

politics, interdependence and campaigning at the heart of citizenship. The contributions from languages and art, though of value, are more tangential and could be sharpened to address central citizenship content relevant to their subject.

- The main programme is built on a commercial package which has its merits in providing a core. However, the tasks suggested tend to provide a uniformity of experience and lack of challenge and some units do not contribute directly to National Curriculum citizenship. At the same time, the treatment of some important aspects is relatively shallow.
- At present topical issues appear periodically in the citizenship scheme of work as separate entities. The best lessons used topical issues to give citizenship content current relevance.
- In terms of the National Curriculum, the core programme tends to concentrate on knowledge and understanding strand with relatively little scope for enquiry and communication, although this is somewhat compensated for in the modules taught by other subjects. There is little scope in core citizenship for participation and responsible action although the school does provide a wide range of opportunities for students' involvement through other means, including flexible Fridays and extra curricular activities.
- The curriculum is successfully augmented by community projects such as Black History month.
- The school council has some achievements to its credit, but is not well known to students. Currently it misses the opportunity to allow students to experience democratic processes. Members of the new school council have recognised that better communication is needed and are ambitious to give the school council a higher profile.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- The school has an accurate view of the quality of provision and citizenship courses have evolved in the light of critical self evaluation. The plans already established by the school address the main weaknesses identified in this letter, specifically Key Stage 4 and assessment.
- A solid scheme of work and an assessment system have been put in place to support the tutor-taught citizenship programme.
- The contribution of subjects to citizenship is unusual and potentially very powerful.
- Despite the clear commitment to citizenship in the school, its omission from the prospectus and the Year 7 communication course miss opportunities to inform students and parents of citizenship's status as a National Curriculum subject in Key Stages 3 and 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- refine and develop the Key Stage 3 programme to deepen student's learning in citizenship across the programme of study
- strengthen citizenship in Key Stage 4
- develop the assessment system to accommodate an eight level scale in citizenship
- develop the school council to model democracy in action.

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 *[delete where not applicable]* and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Scott Harrison
Her Majesty's Inspector