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Dear Mr Wall

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 26 and 27 January 2009 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 groups of students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, observations of part of nine lessons and observation of an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be satisfactory and improving with a number of good features evident.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- It is difficult to accurately assess students' standards and achievement in Years 7 and 8 at present due to the nature of the current provision with 'off-timetable days' for the subject. However, these students demonstrate a reasonable understanding of human rights and responsibilities, the law and justice system and issues concerning care for the environment. Their knowledge and understanding of democratic processes and politics is less secure.

- Some good work has been completed on identity and diversity and what it means to be British. Year 7 students gave thoughtful, considered responses here, based on their work completed in geography.
- At Key Stage 4, progress improves in line with the increased provision and many students demonstrate good understanding of the key areas of the subject. They are confident, mature in expressing their views and enjoy the many opportunities to explore their ideas, discuss and debate with their peers and form considered opinions on topical issues in citizenship lessons.
- Despite the limitations posed by the current curriculum arrangements, the contribution of citizenship-related activities to students' personal and social development is good and sometimes outstanding. This is largely due to the school's imaginative approach to developing opportunities for informed and responsible action across the curriculum and beyond. There are many examples of students being encouraged to make a difference through active citizenship, both within the school and beyond in the local community. Projects such as 'Inspire Young Voice', where students work in partnership with community partners to improve the appearance of the local environment and the ASDAN CoPE project when Year 11 students worked in partnership with senior members of the community on the 'Day in the Life' project, are just two illustrations of the school's commitment to be at the heart of the local community and encourage active participation in community matters.
- There are many opportunities for students to lead: as prefects, peer mentors, in the very active eco-group or through the year and whole school councils. Use of the student voice is a powerful motivator and appreciated by students; they speak confidently about the importance and impact of their council and the difference it makes to school life.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall with some good features.

- The strengths of teaching in the subject are: warm and positive relationships that promote a supportive learning environment for citizenship; the use of a variety of approaches to cater for different learning styles; well-constructed lessons where students can explore the issues and listen to differing viewpoints before offering informed opinions; and the frequently successful use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support and stimulate learning.
- Students say they enjoy the opportunities to discuss ideas and form their own opinions. This was managed well, for example, in a Year 11 drama lesson, when the teacher skilfully handled a discussion about knife crime and the relevant issues for young people.
- Students are learning to develop good collaborative skills. This was illustrated well in the Year 7 'Learn 2 Learn' session where students demonstrated confidence and enthusiasm in team activities and by Year 10 students in their business teams in Developing Enterprise Capabilities.

- In discrete citizenship lessons, lesson objectives are clear and mostly realised successfully as they form the prime focus of the learning.
- Whilst there are undoubtedly some strong contributions made to citizenship by other subjects, sometimes opportunities are missed in these lessons to realise important citizenship objectives, as for example in lessons where teachers' cut short the various processes in their haste to move on with their own specialist subject material.
- At times, learning in citizenship is not sufficiently broken down into small, manageable steps for lower attaining students and tasks are too open-ended to retain their focus and concentration.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory at present.

- The school is aware that the curriculum arrangements currently being trialled in Years 7 and 8 are resulting in patchy coverage and creating difficulties in planning for progression across the Key Stages. This has been thoroughly reviewed and documented with appropriate plans in hand to revise this and revert to discrete citizenship lessons across the school.
- By Year 9 and in Key Stage 4, core provision improves and fully meets requirements. There are imaginative schemes of work in line with the school's principle of every student gaining accreditation in citizenship through the ASDAN CoPE scheme. One of the strengths of provision is the school's determination to review this regularly, evaluate the outcomes for students and adjust the curriculum accordingly to meet their needs. Provision is inclusive; all students have access to the citizenship curriculum and are encouraged and supported to succeed.
- Extended opportunities for citizenship are extensive. Consequently, despite some limitations in formal provision this year in the lower years, many students display good personal and social skills and self-esteem arising from the many opportunities provided to have a voice and take action.
- There is a curriculum map of the contributions made to citizenship across all subjects but this needs some updating to ensure suitable progression of learning and the relevance of activities included in the context of citizenship.
- Structuring the curriculum to ensure that students' progress across the Key Stages can be more easily tracked and monitored is a priority that the school has identified in the departmental documentation, which is clear and detailed.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- The vision for the subject is clear and articulated with passion by senior leaders. It fits well within the Every Child Matters agenda, the school's responsibility to promote community cohesion and the school's overarching values and principles. The school's stated vision for the

subject is also in keeping with the fundamental principles and ethics of the school's specialist business sponsor.

- There is a real commitment in the school to personalise learning experiences and ensure these meet the needs of individual students. Continuing curriculum review and revision is at the heart of this and here, citizenship has equal status with other subjects. It has prominence in the Key Stage 4 curriculum and there is ready acceptance that recent innovations in the lower school have proved limiting in some respects. This has been resolved in future curriculum planning for this age range.
- The commitment to work with a variety of local partners to help students realise practical citizenship in action, rather than simply study a theoretical model, is impressive. Students' work within the Donnington Partnership and the range of external opportunities for practical engagement support the school's commitment to 'community cohesion in action'.
- Subject leadership is good. The subject leader is energetic, committed, thoughtful in her planning and very clear about the way forward for the subject. Self-evaluation is rigorous, honest and accurate. Given the quality of planning and commitment evident, there is good capacity for improvement.

Subject issue: assessment

- At present assessment is satisfactory with the potential to improve quickly next year, as new assessment arrangements are introduced, in line with the revised curriculum.
- Assessment requirements are understood; the subject leader having developed her own assessment levels ladder in advance of statutory requirements last year. There is recognition of the need to ensure that all staff teaching the subject are confident with these requirements - staff training is clearly identified in the development plan.
- There is evidence of a range of suitable assessments, including self and peer assessment, together with regular teacher assessments. This will improve the school's capacity to monitor students' progress across the Key Stages.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the new programmes to be introduced meet statutory requirements and are structured suitably so that students' progression can be more easily distinguished and monitored by teachers
- supporting non-specialist staff by ensuring they understand the requirements of the subject and can incorporate key processes into their lessons.

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