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Dear Mr Belford

Ofsted 2008-09 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit with Ahson Mohammed on 24 and 25 February 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 various groups of students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, observations of parts of nine lessons and observations of two assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- The progress made by students from Year 7 to 11 is good overall. Students demonstrate particularly good understanding of human rights and responsibilities, justice and fairness and law and order. This is because the curriculum covers these aspects well. Students are less secure at Key Stage 3 in aspects of democracy and the processes of government. The school recognises this and has plans to address it.

- Key Stage 3 students demonstrate confidence in discussing issues in lessons, including those of a sensitive or controversial nature. Here, they are sensible and respectful when listening to each other's views.
- Some good work is evident on identity and diversity at Key Stage 3 with students demonstrating good understanding and awareness.
- At Key Stage 4, students' work indicates good understanding of the key areas of the subject. They are confident in expressing their views and particularly enjoy the 'off time-table days', appreciating the range of speakers and topics covered.
- The school's project in linking with Bihar in India and raising funds for the building of a school has caught the imagination of students. They are committed to this project and determined to make a difference to the lives of the orphans in the village. There is real potential here in helping students to understand the issues facing other communities and how they might influence change.
- There are some good examples of how use of the student voice is having a positive impact on school life. The process of electing and organising the student council is helping students to understand the democratic process. The council itself is active and engaging students in decision-making about a variety of school issues. For example, the consultation with students about the school's new learning policy is giving students a significant voice in the core work of the school.
- Sixth form students contribute well to active citizenship. They are involved in mentoring younger students, a range of community-based projects and groups of students regularly visit Geneva to visit the UN and participate in activities there.
- There is a range of activities where younger students can lead and take responsible action: as sports leaders in primary schools, on school councils, in the eco-group, as librarians, school helpers and through various Duke of Edinburgh activities. However, most of these are school-based activities and opportunities to engage in action outside of school within the local community are less well developed.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The discrete teaching in the subject is good: teachers in the small, specialist team are confident, clear about the learning objectives in their lessons and well organised in their planning. The quality of their work is consistently good. Lesson pace is sustained with teachers using the time available well through a variety of relevant learning activities.
- Teachers use questioning well to probe students' higher order thinking skills. They frequently challenge students to expand on their responses in lessons and justify their views, a feature of lessons that many students indicated they enjoy.
- Good teamwork is evident. Teachers say they feel valued and part of a cohesive subject team in which they can contribute ideas and readily share their learning resources.
- The specialist nature of the team has reinforced the status of the subject in students' eyes. They say they enjoy the subject, and feel their teachers make lessons interesting and topical. Students

particularly enjoy discussion work in lessons and opportunities provided to discuss ideas in pairs and groups.

- Good relationships between teachers and students are evident in lessons. This enables students to feel comfortable when asking questions and expressing their opinions. They contribute well in lessons and the majority are eager to respond to tasks.
- Those teachers who teach citizenship and other subjects across the curriculum are skilled at reinforcing aspects of citizenship in a variety of other subjects. For example, in a Year 10 history lesson on internment during the Second World War, students' attention was drawn to issues today surrounding internment at Guantanamo Bay and their thoughts on this. However, sometimes such opportunities are missed across the curriculum to reinforce aspects of citizenship and make these relevant to students' lives and experiences today.
- Marking and feedback to students is variable at present. This is an area for development, as teachers begin marking to level criteria, in order to provide clear information to students on how to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum time available for the subject is tightly planned and organised. It is used well to ensure that statutory requirements are met. The Key Stage 3 curriculum plan clearly identifies which units are covering PSE requirements and those that meet citizenship objectives. Units of work are prepared thoroughly and resources shared between teaching staff.
- Some aspects of the curriculum are covered particularly well, including human rights and responsibilities, and the law and justice system. These are reinforced strongly through a series of visits, speakers and external links with various organisations at home and abroad.
- At Key Stage 4, curriculum time is constrained, but the imaginative use made of 'off-timetable days', work achieved in religious studies and the short course GCSE ensures that statutory requirements are met.
- A strength of the provision is that it is kept carefully under review, revised and adapted accordingly, with new ideas introduced as appropriate.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- The subject is well organised and managed. The subject leader has a good understanding of the subject matter and is clear about requirements. He provides good direction for the work of the department and leads the team with enthusiasm.
- The subject leader's assessments of the department's strengths and areas for development are accurate. Development planning is sensible, realistic and pragmatic.

- The subject team is well led - teachers feel valued and committed to the ongoing development of the citizenship curriculum. There is an evident willingness to try out new approaches.

Subject issue: assessment

- At present, assessment procedures are satisfactory.
- The school's previous assessment and reporting system was satisfactory. This has been revised in line with the new assessment requirements, which are clearly understood. There are good plans in place to move to a new system. Liaison has taken place with another school to share ideas and expertise and staff training has taken place.
- There is evidence of a range of suitable assessments being introduced, including self-assessment, together with regular teacher assessments. This will improve the school's capacity to monitor students' progress across the key stages and use assessment more fully to plan learning. At present, students' contributions to discussions and group work are not routinely recognised or assessed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the curriculum is maximised by supporting non-specialist staff to ensure they understand the requirements of the subject and can incorporate key processes into their curriculum areas where appropriate
- furthering the opportunities for students to demonstrate active citizenship beyond the school community and establishing links with a range of partners outside of the school to enable this
- developing and establishing a range of assessment procedures so that the full range of students' skills and contributions are recognised beyond their written achievements.

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