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Dear Mr Donnellan

Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 and 29 January 2009 to look at work in citizenship.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the assessment of students' achievements.

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 and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in citizenship are good overall.

- Students have good knowledge and understanding of human rights, the role of voluntary organisations, identity and diversity, global issues, the role and significance of the media, and education for sustainable development. Students taking GCSEs in business studies and history at Key Stage 4 have particularly good knowledge and understanding of most areas of the citizenship programme of study.
- Students have more limited knowledge and understanding of parliamentary democracy, how laws are made and the criminal justice

system, how the economy functions, and the roles of the European Union and Commonwealth.

- Where citizenship is delivered through other subjects, the quality of students' written work is much higher than in discrete citizenship lessons. For example, sustained pieces of writing on conflict and decision-making around the exploitation of Antarctica in Year 9 geography, and the roots of present day terrorism in GCSE history, display depth and sophistication of understanding.
- Students are given good opportunities to develop their critical thinking, enquiry and communication skills. Students use the internet to research topics and debate complex and controversial issues such as euthanasia and asylum in religious education lessons, confident that their views will be listened to and respected.
- Students have opportunities to make a positive contribution and develop their skills of advocacy and representation by becoming involved in activities such as: the student council; the UK Youth Parliament, the college CAFOD group, Youth Club Leadership, the Fair-Trade stall and other charity fund-raising events. The opinions of students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are taken into account through their representation on the student council. Although students are encouraged to participate and take responsibility in a wide range of community activities, the college does not formally monitor the extent of their involvement.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Teaching is most often good where citizenship is delivered through other closely related subjects, for example, through the teaching of sustainable development in geography and science, or identity and diversity in religious education. However, where teachers are unfamiliar with the citizenship topic their lack of expertise is evident and they are unable to develop students' understanding.
- In the better lessons, teachers use different approaches and involve pupils in learning actively about citizenship through critical thinking and enquiry. For example, relevant and topical resources are used in teaching about the role and significance of the media in English and world trade and development in technology. Teachers use interactive white boards to add pace and interest to lessons but, in less successful lessons do not always ensure teaching is topical and up-to-date.
- Discrete citizenship lessons are delivered by a mix of form tutors and external speakers. Students enjoy these sessions but the depth of their understanding is limited by the 'one off' nature of much of the input.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported by teaching assistants but there is little evidence that teachers plan lessons to better meet the needs of higher attaining students.
- The marking of citizenship work in other subjects is often helpful in explaining to students about what they needed to do to improve. However, this is not the case in discrete citizenship lessons where work is not marked.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good overall but there are inconsistencies.

- The audit of citizenship across the curriculum shows a generally good understanding by departments of the requirements of the citizenship National Curriculum. However, some examples of their contributions demonstrate breadth rather than depth of coverage.
- Human rights, the role of voluntary organisations, and environmental issues are covered well in the curriculum. Teaching of these topics occurs in discrete citizenship lessons and across the curriculum at both key stages and is linked to well-documented active citizenship work. This is far less the case with parliamentary democracy where delivery is patchy and democratic processes are not routinely reflected in the selection of the student council.
- Option choices affect students' access to comprehensive citizenship at Key Stage 4 where those taking business studies, history and geography at GCSE are most likely to receive their full entitlement. However, in compulsory religious education and science lessons at GCSE, areas of the curriculum such as identity and diversity, sustainable development and the debating of topical issues are well covered.

Leadership and management of citizenship

The quality of leadership and management of citizenship is satisfactory.

- The school has a vision for citizenship which links well to the wider ethos of the college. Policy documentation shows that the subject leader has a good grasp of the requirements and has communicated these well to the other departments. She has worked hard to coordinate the work of a large and disparate group of form and subject teachers, but because there is no monitoring of teaching and learning in citizenship, she is unable to base improvement planning, or ascertain staff development needs, on sound evaluation data.
- Resources are sufficient in terms of materials and staff responsibility but not in terms of departmental meeting and development time, monitoring and evaluation time, and staff training.

Subject issue: the assessment of students' achievements

- Students' work in discrete citizenship lessons is not marked or formally assessed, making it difficult to make judgments about the progress of individuals or different groups of students. Where aspects of citizenship are delivered through other subjects, it is possible for teachers to make some judgments about progress between the key stages. However, all reporting of progress in citizenship focuses on skills development rather than students' knowledge and understanding.
- The college plans to have new statements of attainment for Year 7 in place by summer 2009.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- students' knowledge and understanding of democratic processes, the workings of the criminal justice system, the functioning of the economy, the EU and Commonwealth
- the assessment of students' progress in citizenship
- the monitoring of student involvement in active citizenship
- the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in citizenship.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop citizenship in the college.

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