

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr R Badcock
Principal
Milton Keynes College
Chaffron Way Centre
Woughton Campus West
Leadenhall
Milton Keynes
Buckinghamshire
MK6 5LP

Dear Mr Badcock

Ofsted subject survey: good practice in Post 16 Citizenship Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 April 2009 to look at work in citizenship education.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included meetings with students, managers and tutors, classroom observations and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- Learners display a good understanding of national and local citizenship issues.
- Many are active, engaged and critical young citizens who make individual contributions to college life through their involvement in community based activities. They display a good understanding of political processes and the nature of decision-making.
- Learners across all abilities and levels freely and confidently express their views and opinions.
- Learners contextualise citizenship issues within their particular area of study. For example, learners in beauty therapy made perceptive links between attitudes displayed to drug misuse and the use of commercial drugs in the beauty industry.

- The contribution which art, design and photography make to the citizenship curriculum is outstanding.
- Topicality is generally well used to reinforce the quality of learning. In instances such as business studies and public services, tutors made good links between current political and financial matters and the curriculum.
- There are well-conceived and effective links made between the taught programme and college activities such as volunteering, Prince's Trust activity and the youth work team. Learner involvement in city wide youth councils and in campaigns on issues such as transport, sex and relationships and homophobic bullying bolster their learning and strengthen the citizenship curriculum.
- The curriculum has evolved well to reflect the college's strategic commitment to learner participation, equality and diversity.
- Citizenship gains good prominence through college citizenship day conferences.
- Tutors create a purposeful and harmonious atmosphere and are thoughtful in their lesson preparation. They display sensitivity to individual situations but do not sufficiently utilise the learners' own experiences and views to support and reinforce learning.
- The broad citizenship programme is well monitored by managers but, thus far, there has been limited progress in learner assessment. Managers are however looking at the potential of peer assessment and unit accreditation to help develop this aspect.
- There is a very clear vision by managers which encourages innovation and creativity. Tutors enjoy teaching the tutorial/enrichment programme including citizenship.
- The model is dependant upon the devolved responsibility of a large number of tutors. There is no specialist citizenship trained lead but managers have well defined responsibilities in relation to the enrichment and tutorial programme. Each influences the quality of provision effectively.
- Tutors have access to citizenship teaching resources though the college intranet. They make good use of this system. Resources are selected and moderated by managers. There is also good practical back-up to tutors through curriculum support and team teaching from those staff who oversee the tutorial scheme.
- The commitment to inclusion is outstanding and manifests itself well in the day to day life of the college. The citizenship programme extends to all 14-19 learners regardless of level or ability.

Areas for development

- As identified by the college, it would be timely to review and refine the citizenship programme to ensure that teaching and learning are sufficiently informed by the principles underpinning citizenship education.
- Support and encourage tutors to draw more freely on the views, experiences and opinions of students in citizenship lessons.

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

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector