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Ms S Upson
Headteacher
Hillside Special School
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Dear Ms Upson

Ofsted subject survey: identifying good practice in post 16 citizenship education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 1 May 2009 to look at work in Hillside Special School.

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 observations of lessons, discussions with students and staff and scrutiny of documentation.

Features of good practice observed

- Students achieve well in post-16 citizenship lessons and in the school council. A minority are able to make sophisticated choices about what the school can afford to spend on an activity; others consider the opinions of their peers and learn about how decisions are made.
- Teaching and support staff are acutely aware of the cognitive and physical needs of students. They work co-operatively and reinforce learning very effectively. Sensitive teaching and support ensures that each student has a 'voice' and that all learn to work with and take account of each others' needs.
- The curriculum for citizenship, including the post-16 aspect, is very well conceived, planned and managed. The elements of social and moral responsibility, community involvement and political awareness are clear and underpinned by a whole school ethos which encourages advocacy, autonomy and respect.

- Good planning and effective promotion has enabled citizenship to become a clear and distinct aspect of the school. Other elements of the post-16 curriculum, for example work related learning, complement the citizenship education.
- Community projects are used effectively to support learning in citizenship.
- Curriculum planning is outstanding. There is excellent, well-informed direction from managers; good long, medium and short term planning is in place which supports delivery in the classroom.
- Assessment and monitoring are effective and achieved through individual pupil profiles. A detailed application of P scales allows small but valuable steps to be recorded.
- Leadership and management of citizenship are outstanding. The subject leader has very good specialist knowledge of citizenship education and its practical application. As head teacher you build well on the evident skills and talents of your staff.
- The themes underpinning the citizenship programme resonate well with the whole school ethos and its commitment to the 'student voice.'

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop post-16 citizenship in the school.

As I explained previously, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and 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