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19 June 2009

Mr E Green  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Green

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 and 17 June 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 political understanding.

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 and observations of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

- Achievement and standards are good overall but uneven, reflecting the curriculum.
- 78% of the first cohort of students to take the short course GCSE gained grades A\* - C. Year 11 students showed very good understanding of the international dimension of citizenship. Students prepared very well for GCSE coursework assignments.
- Year 9 students were confident in discussing issues such as human rights, the law and types of crime. They were less strong on the key areas of democracy and politics although they saw how school council elections mirror democratic processes.

- In lessons, students demonstrated good skills of teamwork and participation, for example in a simulation on sweatshop conditions in the developing world.
- Work in students' files included evidence of enquiry in depth on projects such as homelessness in the local community and the impact of unfair trading practice. However, some work in books was shortweight and scrappy and the written record of work in citizenship was inconsistent overall.

### Quality of teaching and learning

- The quality of teaching in all lessons observed was good and some teaching was outstanding.
- Characteristics of good and outstanding teaching included the high quality of preparation and resources; excellent classroom management with often complex sequences of productive activities; very good relationships with students who were usually very responsive and involved in lessons; and a good understanding of students' learning through questioning and stocktaking.
- The best lessons were very memorable for students because of their high level of involvement in challenging activities.
- Very good use was made of ICT.
- The department is producing assessment data for citizenship to show progression but more work needs to be done to ensure that assessment is consistent and reliable. Some marking of work is helpful but more regular and constructive marking would contribute to higher expectations of written work.

### Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good overall.

- Citizenship has a good presence in the curriculum but it is unbalanced and lacking definition in some respects.
- Citizenship purports to form one quarter of the New Horizons programme in Year 7; although it makes an important contribution it does not have the same visibility as other subjects, nor is it comparable in having a module that leads on key citizenship content.
- In Year 8 and 9, citizenship is broadly defined to include PSHE and some religious studies. Some key content areas such as government and politics are given insufficient emphasis.
- In Key Stage 4 take-up of short course GCSE is increasing and I note the school's plan to introduce a full course GCSE citizenship programme.
- Work has been done to promote citizenship in other departments and across the school more broadly. For example, students spoke about work on discrimination in assemblies. I have also been told about work with creative partnerships to support understanding of identity and diversity and about activities to foster community cohesion.

## Leadership and management

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- The school's review of citizenship provision is incisive and forward looking.
- Strong leadership from the top has created space for citizenship in the school's innovative curriculum and promoted it in the broader life of the school.
- At the level of subject leadership, the definition of citizenship is insufficiently precise and a broad audit against new requirements has not recognised areas of relative strength and weakness within the programme.
- A stronger case needs to be made for citizenship within the revised Key Stage 3 curriculum.
- Steps have been taken to move towards a more specialist teaching team in the light of evaluation.
- Good use is made of resources and the development of the use of ICT for learning is appropriate.
- The capacity to improve is very good.

Subject issue: political understanding

- This key aspect of citizenship is given insufficient weight in the curriculum.
- Some units of work make a good contribution to this area, for example on local government. At times, however, opportunities are lost, for example work on imaginary rather than real political parties.
- Some good work was seen on topical political events.
- The school council operates with formal procedures that usefully mirror democratic processes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- establish a more precise definition of citizenship as a subject within the broader context of citizenship in the school
- in so doing, consider how more weight can be given to the key aspects of parliamentary democracy and politics
- while maintaining the high quality (and popular) discussion of citizenship issues in lessons, consider how skills of enquiry and written outcomes can be made more regular and consistent
- continue to work on the development of assessment, including work on the range of competencies and qualitative depth necessary to be able to ascribe National Curriculum levels.

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

Scott Harrison  
Her Majesty's Inspector