

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Ms M Austin  
Headteacher  
Ashcroft High School  
Crawley Green Road  
Luton  
Bedfordshire  
LU2 9AG

Dear Ms Austin

Ofsted survey inspection programme – citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 7 and 8 October 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 focus on the development of students' 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observations of lessons and activities.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good with outstanding features.

Achievement is good

- Students engage well with citizenship activities. In lessons, they generally have a mature response, ask pertinent questions and readily raise issues. Many have a good knowledge of relevant national and global concerns.
- Students have learned, and are able to put into practice, political and social skills gained through various student voice and curricular activities.

- There are good examples of students developing skills of enquiry and communication through in-depth research projects related to citizenship issues.
- Students learn about appropriate citizenship related topics through a range of subjects. Documentation points to modern foreign languages' extended work on 'differences and culture' and media studies students developing a critical approach to the influence of the press.

The quality of teaching is good.

- Lessons are well ordered and have a good pace, generally allowing students sufficient time to complete activities. There are good examples of teachers helping students relate to global and international issues by focusing initially on their local area.
- Teachers are confident in tackling controversial issues and generally introduce topicality into lessons.
- Delivery of at least the taught element of citizenship depends on the devolved responsibility of a large number of tutors. The obvious benefit of this approach is that tutors know students well. However, while clearly committed, tutorial staff do not have sufficient subject understanding to maximise the impact of those good relationships.
- Other weaknesses include teachers' lack of background knowledge, assessment and insufficient demarcation between key stages. There were only a few examples of marking of students' work which included an assessment of their progress and which helped create a dialogue between teacher and student.

The quality of the curriculum is good

- The citizenship curriculum is encompassed in personal, social, health citizenship, economic education (PSHCEE), through subjects more generally, plus a creative range of participative activities and opportunities for enrichment. Citizenship is further supported through 'Opening Minds' and SEAL activities. The impact of this holistic approach is good, but would be strengthened if there were a clearer shared view about the citizenship education programme of study.
- Students' active participation and involvement in many aspects of school life is outstanding. Such involvement is widespread and students learn much from it. They are able to exercise their rights and responsibilities and see how they are able to influence change. They understand how decisions are made and the parameters that exist in decision-making. Activities, such as the peer-led behaviour panel, help students take action on issues which are at the heart of the school. Participative activities of this nature are generally supported by appropriate skills training.

- A weekly theme on issues, such as justice, helps inform the citizenship curriculum and helps raise awareness and encourage ownership across subjects, activities and assemblies.
- There are good and relevant visual images and displays around the school.

Leadership and management of the subject are good

- There is a clear and well articulated link between citizenship in its broadest sense and the school's strategic aspirations, attainment, students' motivation and its commitment to learners' participation.
- Increased management resources have been put into the PSHCEE area. As a result, teachers note good and recent improvements in subject support.
- There is an informed and responsive team overseeing PSHCEE related issues. This team has yet to fully determine the relationship of the citizenship programme of study within the overall learning area and create the necessary delineation between PSHE and citizenship.
- Measures are in place to quality assure teaching and learning, and these work well.

Subject issue: Students' political understanding is good.

- Students have many and varied opportunities to practise political and democratic skills in the day-to-day life of the school. They are enabled to consider and reach real decisions about student behaviour, sanctions and rewards, and register their views about various school strategies. Knowledge about parliament and government was variable in those students interviewed, with some highly knowledgeable but others less engaged. The 'theme for the week' raises awareness about topical and political issues across the school. The school capitalises well on the different cultural and linguistic experiences of migrant students, to the benefit of all.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- creating greater clarity and shared understanding about the citizenship programme of study
- improving assessment and subject planning
- providing more professional development for tutors delivering citizenship education.

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

Tony Gallagher  
Her Majesty's Inspector