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Ms M Holt
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Holt

Ofsted survey inspection programme – citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 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 particular 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Students have satisfactory knowledge and understanding although some aspects are limited. They understand democracy through elections for the student council and have opportunities to discuss and debate topical issues, but have limited understanding of local and parliamentary democracy, public finances and alternative electoral systems. Students have had a good range of learning experiences relating to the criminal

justice system and, as a result, a good understanding of the consequences of crime.

- Students have satisfactory understanding of human rights and recognise the importance of freedom of speech. They are aware of how prejudice, racism and stereotyping affect people, but their awareness of Britain's diversity is limited and they have few opportunities to meet people from other cultures.
- Students have well-developed skills in enquiry, communication and critical thinking. They research topical issues and voice well-considered opinions. Through form representation, the student council, peer mentoring and other areas of active citizenship, they develop good skills of advocacy and representation. They are very good at initiating and organising charity fundraising and volunteering across the school and in the wider community.

Quality of teaching of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning in citizenship is satisfactory.

- In citizenship lessons, the teacher demonstrates good subject knowledge and sessions taught by outside agencies are generally of good quality. However, where teachers deliver citizenship through other subjects, the depth and breadth of study is insufficient to meet the citizenship objectives.
- A range of different approaches are used in citizenship lessons. Questioning is used to good effect to assess learning and develop understanding. Opportunities are taken to relate lessons to current events. Students talk freely about controversial topics, showing respect for the views of others.
- The specialist teacher has a good understanding of how well students are progressing; work is graded, and commented on, expectations are high and students know what to do to improve. However, assessment and reporting in citizenship is combined with personal, social and health education and does not always pertain to citizenship.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is satisfactory.

- At Key Stage 3, all curriculum requirements are met. Legal and human rights are revisited each year, but there is a lighter touch to other areas such as the workings of parliament and Britain's diversity. At Key Stage 4, there are fewer dedicated citizenship lessons and fewer topics, although they are covered in greater depth.

- The programme is substantially enhanced through citizenship-related events, trips and off-timetable activities, such as visits to the galleries of justice, remembrance week, local democracy week and crime and safety awareness day. However, not all activities are part of the student entitlement, resulting in some students at Key Stage 4 receiving a more enriched citizenship programme than others.
- The school undertakes base-line assessments in citizenship of all Year 7 students and this helps to inform planning for Key Stage 3.
- Students with special educational needs study a range of citizenship topics, such as the environment and human rights, but do not explore Britain's diversity or study political literacy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is inadequate.

- The school does not have an appointed subject leader and no vision for citizenship represented in policy and development planning. However, the considerable skills and dedication of the specialist teacher, together with your support as a newly appointed headteacher, indicate good capacity to improve.
- The time dedicated to citizenship is insufficient at Key Stage 4, and cross-curricular delivery cannot be relied on to make up the shortfall as it is neither strategically planned nor monitored.
- There is no dedicated departmental meeting time, no monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning, and no subject review. In recent years, there have been no opportunities for teachers to attend training in the teaching of citizenship and material resources are poor compared with other large subjects in the school.
- The specialist teacher has single-handedly produced suitable schemes of work, materials, subject plans and assessment packages. She is well aware of the strengths and weaknesses in the department.
- Parents and carers are informed of citizenship through the prospectus and school website. Active citizenship is publicised well around the school and in the local community and the school makes good use of national and local agencies to contribute to the curriculum. Although students engage very well with the local community, there is no policy for citizenship and community cohesion.

Subject issue: students' political understanding

- Political understanding is provided for in the curriculum but in insufficient depth for it to have a good impact on students' knowledge and understanding.
- Students understand the basic principles of democracy through the election of the student council which follows democratic processes.
- Some students understand the policy differences of political parties and are able to talk about political issues of the day. Most are interested in current affairs, although their understanding is often collected outside of the school and classroom.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- Ensuring all students have an entitlement to the full citizenship curriculum at Key Stage 4.
- Further developing students' political literacy and understanding of Britain's diversity.
- Supporting and developing subject leadership by:
 - providing adequate resources for departmental materials, meeting time and staff training
 - monitoring and evaluating teaching and learning to inform improvement planning.

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

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector