

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



19 November 2009

Mr T Roderick
Headteacher
Sheringham High School and Sixth Form
Holt Road
Sheringham
Norfolk
NR26 8ND

Dear Mr Roderick

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 and 11 November 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 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in Citizenship

Achievement is satisfactory.

- Students are generally well-focused and engaged in lessons. They work well together.
- There are good examples of Year 8 students articulating citizenship-related concepts such as campaigning, community consultation, compromise and democracy. In such instances, students display a critical and questioning eye on issues and on the world around them.

- Students research topics well, individually and in groups. They researched the background of a charity before a visit from its representative which helped hone their knowledge and sharpen their ability to ask questions.
- There is, however, a significant variability across Year groups in students' knowledge and understanding of, for example, topical news issues, the work of the Government and of the voluntary and charitable sector.
- Those involved in various schemes, such as peer mentors and voluntary and community action, gain much in terms of their leadership skills and confidence. They also learn about underpinning social and political issues. In the most effective instances, students have initiated projects themselves, as groups or as individuals, often in response to local or national issues which they feel strongly about.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching is satisfactory.

- The best lessons are planned imaginatively and the tasks set are interesting. Groups were assigned different tasks which helped contribute to the overall success of the lesson as well as providing opportunities for differentiated learning.
- In the most effective dedicated citizenship lessons, teachers maximised the short time available through good preparation and by drawing on the curriculum support of library staff. Teachers promoted simple but effective research techniques, helping students get to the root of issues and understand the principles and parameters of, for instance, effective campaigning.
- Use by teachers of citizenship-related language and terminology helped students develop the necessary vocabulary to describe key concepts. In one instance, the teacher built voting into the fabric of the lesson, thereby enabling students to experience winning and losing.
- Despite these good examples, citizenship teaching is at a relatively formative stage. Teachers are still seeking to understand the balance between learning derived through active classroom discussion and written course content. They are not sufficiently drawing on citizenship key concepts and key processes to structure their lessons.
- In weaker lessons, instructions were not sufficiently clear and teachers were not posing the best questions to elicit the best response.
- While consideration is being given to peer- and self-assessment approaches, assessment is hindered overall by an insufficiently clear, understood and shared view about the subject.

Quality of curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The citizenship GCSE short-course has yet to be embedded sufficiently well. Its faltering start has not helped the status of the subject.
- Work seen in the discrete citizenship lessons provides a generally good platform for the subject. The best lessons, illustrated by their distinctiveness, were enjoyed by students and taught by enthusiastic teachers. There is a growing sense that students recognise the subject's link with the world around them. Experience in these discrete lessons is helping teachers delineate more clearly between key stages.
- The overall pattern of provision is, however, insufficiently coherent. The pattern of one period each fortnight provides significant challenges in terms of continuity and progression.
- The curriculum places insufficient emphasis on the 'critical and engaged' citizen.
- There is evidence that students are gaining some of the necessary knowledge and skills through subjects including history, RE, and geography, but there is more to do to align these.
- Some rich citizenship experiences are provided in the sixth form through internal activities such as Amnesty International events, peer supporters, sixth-form enrichment and external links to Norwich Crown Court and Norfolk County Council. Students engage most meaningfully when they are enabled to determine issues and actions for themselves. Insufficient account is being taken of the development of students' skills through their participation in citizenship-related activities out of school.

Leadership and management of citizenship

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- The subject has faced a protracted period of difficulty which has had a negative impact on its status and on the quality of students' experiences. Managers have, however, taken decisive action to tackle these shortcomings. Significant among these has been the formation of a small, dedicated team to deliver citizenship education lessons and to bolster the quality of the GCSE short-course.
- Managers accurately self-assess citizenship as being in a transitional stage, the immediate challenges being the need to tackle perceptions of the subject and ensuring parity of esteem for citizenship.
- Subject leadership is good. The subject leader has effectively and pragmatically dealt with immediate concerns and taken actions to improve lesson planning, support students and ensure the completion of outstanding GCSE course work.
- An improvement plan is in place which sets out the main issues to be tackled, some of which have already been achieved. The overall planning approach, however, is neither sufficiently structured nor coherent. Plans do not differentiate between strategic, middle-management and classroom tasks.

- A new dedicated teaching area and recently catalogued curriculum materials are helping to support teaching and learning.
- Senior managers have supported the continuing professional development of the subject leader through visits to other schools and advisory support from the local authority. There is, however, a need for a more comprehensive programme, elements of which can be readily based on the school's own practice in citizenship lessons.

Subject issue: students' political understanding

Students' political understanding is satisfactory.

- There is good commitment among staff to raising students' awareness about political and community issues in what is a largely mono-cultural rural community with limited social mobility. The levels of political understanding among students vary considerably, however. Cross-curricular activities permeate the school and support this agenda well. They include a very productive and active engagement of the local MP in the curriculum, visits to the Houses of Parliament and students' involvement in local campaigns.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- establishing a clearer vision for and shared understanding of the citizenship programmes of study
- tackling continuing professional development needs in respect of subject planning, subject knowledge, teaching and learning, assessment and the cross-curricular elements of citizenship
- developing more coherent strategic and subject-level 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

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector