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27 November 2009

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Dear Ms Skelding

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 and 17 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 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons, lunchtime activities, form time and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good with outstanding features.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is good with outstanding features.

- Students demonstrate good understanding of issues such as human rights and responsibilities, sustainability, identity and diversity, stereotyping, prejudice and discrimination and the role of the media in influencing public opinion. Students who study GCSE history and geography have some awareness of the roles of the European Union and the Commonwealth. Those who have opted for business studies at Key Stage 4 have good awareness of consumer rights and public finance.

- Most students have gained a basic understanding of democratic principles from the election of the student council but have limited political understanding. They do, however, have a good understanding of Britain's diversity, and the college's International School status helps to develop their very good global, cultural awareness.
- Students in the sixth form have a good understanding of the criminal justice system but their political awareness is largely dependent on their option choices.
- In citizenship lessons, students are motivated and enthusiastic. They demonstrate excellent skills in enquiry, communication and critical thinking and engage well in project work that requires them to research and present information.
- Those elected to the student council develop outstanding skills of advocacy and representation and several have represented the college in the Bradford and Keighley Youth Parliament.
- Students have numerous opportunities to develop their outstanding skills of participation and responsible action in citizenship, including acting as ansaars (prefects), mentors, librarians, Junior Sports Leaders, house captains and anti-bullying champions and by leading assemblies and organising events.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities access the same programme as their peers. They participate well in lessons because work is tailored to meet their needs and they receive good support from teaching assistants.

Quality of teaching of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning in citizenship is outstanding.

- Teachers demonstrate expert knowledge in citizenship lessons and in the host subjects that contribute to the programme. They use a wide range of relevant, topical resources and involve students in learning actively through critical thinking and enquiry.
- Teachers understand well how to deal with sensitive issues. Students are encouraged to voice their opinions and do so with intelligence and confidence while respecting the rights of others to think differently.
- Through the excellent use of questioning, teachers know how well students are progressing and ensure they understand. However, apart from assessed pieces of work, most work in citizenship is not marked and students are unaware of what they need to do to improve. The college is at the early stages of developing an improved assessment system.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very effectively to raise standards in citizenship. Teachers use interactive whiteboard technology with flair and creativity. For example, in a lesson on poverty, students watched an animation voiced by a real child, which provoked considerable debate and discussion.

- Themed events, such as the International Day and the Year 9 Olympic bid, are appreciated by students who feel they gain a lot from this approach to learning.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good and improving.

- Students have an entitlement to citizenship in all years within the personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education programme. This is supplemented by assemblies, form time, school links, charity work, community projects, competitions and focus days such as the model United Nations conference and European Language Day.
- The recently updated curriculum covers most aspects of the National Curriculum programme of study, although not at both key stages. At Key Stage 3, the new curriculum includes campaigning, government, parliament and democracy, the United Nations and electoral systems. Issues which are light touch or missing in Key Stage 3 are the criminal justice system, the role of the media in influencing public opinion, the European Union and the allocation of public finances.
- At Key Stage 4, students learn about pressure groups, the role of voluntary organisations and charities through active campaigning. They also study the role and significance of the press and the criminal justice system. New Year 10 schemes of work include political literacy.
- The International School programme makes an outstanding contribution to the global dimension. Students have opportunities to communicate with young people from other cultures through school-linking work locally and overseas.
- The subject leader has a very good understanding of the requirements of the National Curriculum programme of study and the need to balance the key citizenship strands, concepts and processes.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- Sufficient resources have been allocated for citizenship. Subject texts are up-to-date and ICT facilities are in place in all classrooms. The team meet regularly on an individual, informal basis with the subject leader. Staff would like opportunities to share good practice and there are plans for this to happen in the future.
- The quality of teaching and learning is monitored by the head of the humanities and informs development planning and training. Work scrutiny takes place, as do end-of-module evaluations by students and staff. The subject leader is responsible for writing schemes of work for the team and these are of good quality. Improved assessment systems and the process for reporting to parents are work in progress.

- The subject leader has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the department and has produced quality action plans. Under the current assessment arrangements, the college is better able to judge the quality of teaching than the quality of learning in citizenship.
- The department contributes very well to the college's overall outstanding community cohesion, particularly through outstanding participation and responsible action in the community. The subject leader enjoys extensive support from the senior leadership team and the capacity to improve is good.

Subject issue: students' political understanding

Students' political understanding is satisfactory.

- Most students in the school have developed a basic understanding of democratic principles but have a limited awareness of non-democratic or other political systems, the range of political parties, the workings of parliament, local and national government, or how laws are made. At Key Stages 4 and 5, students' political awareness is largely dependent on their option choices.
- Some on the student council have represented the college at the local Youth Parliament, and have debated with counsellors at the City Hall and with MPs who have visited the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring the curriculum meets the requirements of the National Curriculum programme of study at both key stages
- improving the assessment and marking of students' work to:
 - enable the monitoring of progress across the key stages
 - help students understand what they need to do to improve.

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