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Mr R Higgins  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Higgins

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 19 and 20 January 2010 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 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 five citizenship lessons and others where a contribution to citizenship was identified by the school.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is satisfactory.

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are satisfactory with good features.

- Of the students taking the short course citizenship GCSE, 49% gained grade C or above in the first year of the course.
- Students have good knowledge and understanding of aspects of the citizenship curriculum, particularly diversity, rights and responsibilities and aspects of law.

- Political understanding is an area of relative weakness.
- Skills of advocacy, representation and action are less well developed than other aspects of the citizenship curriculum.
- Achievement of students in the GCSE option group is generally good.
- Students enjoy the topical elements of citizenship and opportunities to discuss issues that concern them.
- Students have good opportunities to take responsibility by becoming school councillors, sports leaders and mentors, and in activities such as fundraising for charity.

### Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is satisfactory with good features.

- Lessons were planned well with a range of interesting activities that engaged the students. These included a lesson where GCSE students used games they had developed to teach Year 8 students about human rights; and lessons about the role of the press and about stereotyping and discrimination.
- Learning objectives were clear and students knew what was expected of them. In two of the lessons, explicit use was made of assessment criteria to improve understanding.
- The school self-evaluation form and the GCSE examination results analysis acknowledge some past inconsistency of teaching and the impact of this on students' attitudes. The location of citizenship within the humanities department has helped teachers to tackle these inconsistencies.
- There are no trained specialist teachers of citizenship. Teachers have satisfactory subject knowledge but there is a continuing need for training.

### Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is satisfactory.

- Significant progress has been made in developing the citizenship curriculum since 2007. Although the time for citizenship in Key Stage 3 is still limited, there is a defined place in the curriculum, taken forward in Key Stage 4 with a short or full GCSE course.
- The thematic approach to religious education and citizenship in Key Stage 3 has some merits but the association of specific religions with aspects of citizenship presents difficulties in the curriculum and assessment. Set tasks are not sharp enough and not sufficiently coordinated with the 'independent study' programme.
- Documentation refers to the previous National Curriculum model and the emphasis is tilted towards knowledge and understanding rather than citizenship 'processes'.

- Interim arrangements for Key Stage 4 notwithstanding, short and full GCSE courses have had demonstrable benefits in terms of depth and rigour of work.
- The citizenship curriculum is augmented by contributions from other subjects, with some substantial links in subjects such as English, drama, science and geography. The interim provision of a Year 9 core programme through assemblies and tutorials has enabled the school to overcome staffing difficulties. Additionally, students are provided with opportunities through the broader life of the school.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- Having identified inadequacies in provision, you have taken steps to give citizenship a subject identity. These include the appointment of a citizenship leader, curriculum time, resources and training.
- Citizenship has been maintained during the absence of the subject leader, including the completion of a probing and accurate self-evaluation. Close analysis of GCSE results has also led to changes in provision.
- The important job of incorporating the revised National Curriculum provides the returning subject leader with the opportunity to tackle the imbalances identified above.
- There is evidence of benefits to teaching and learning arising from the whole-school focus on assessment for learning and development of thinking skills.
- The school has recognised the important contribution citizenship can make to community cohesion.

#### Subject issue: students' political understanding

This is an area of relative weakness at present. Interim measures to strengthen this aspect include the use of assemblies and tutorials in Year 9. However, political understanding needs a much stronger place in the citizenship subject curriculum.

Students have opportunities to take part in democratic processes such as the election of the school council. Students might consider how this representative body could be made more democratic and accountable.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the curriculum against the revised National Curriculum to promote the key concepts of democracy and justice and the skills of research, advocacy and action
- continuing to develop periodic assessment with a tighter focus on citizenship objectives

- maximising the benefits of contributions to the citizenship curriculum from those subjects where elements of citizenship might be taught and assessed
- continuing to develop citizenship subject knowledge through training and, when possible, recruitment.

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  
Additional Inspector