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Mr D Holden  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Holden

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 27 and 28 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 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, students and a community police officer; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of parts of 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is satisfactory with some good features.

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are satisfactory.

- At Key Stage 3, students demonstrate satisfactory understanding of citizenship. They are more secure in their knowledge of rights and responsibilities and the workings of the legal and justice system. Students have a reasonable understanding of democracy and government. However, they are less knowledgeable about how local government works.

- At Key Stage 4, students have good knowledge of rights and responsibilities and environmental issues including how the environment might be protected. They demonstrate satisfactory awareness of democracy and justice and identity and diversity in the UK. However, although they have a good understanding of different cultures and faiths, they have not fully explored the values and perspectives that are shared. Students understand the principles of democracy and have some understanding of the actions citizens can take in democratic processes to influence decisions. However, apart from those who study history at Key Stage 4, students' knowledge about other forms of government outside the UK is limited.
- Opportunities for extended writing in the subject are limited at present. The majority of students value the opportunities for discussion and debate in lessons and enjoy their learning; however, they noted that opportunities to research issues and produce their own work are limited. Students' written work, in humanities in particular, demonstrates good skills of enquiry and critical thinking. This enables them to research issues and form well-founded arguments. However, such opportunities need extending to all students.
- The opportunities for students to participate in leadership and demonstrate responsible action are extensive within the school and beyond. Consequently, their personal development through active citizenship is excellent. There are many good examples of students having a voice and making a difference; notably, an effective and well-organised school council, the work of sports leaders, peer mentors, and the Astronomer group who take responsibility for the production of the school newsletter. Students also engage in highly successful partnership work with the local police, discussing issues of local concern, deciding on solutions and taking responsibility for implementing action to improve matters. This has made a direct impact on community relations, for example the excellent 'Live Age' event to break down barriers between the generations and foster better understanding.

#### Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- A majority of Key Stage 4 lessons were observed during this visit. The teaching observed was consistently good, illustrating a number of key strengths. These include detailed planning to meet citizenship objectives, the use of a variety of stimulating resources and interesting learning activities. Good opportunities are created for students to reflect on their own opinions and in some instances, modify these in the course of the lesson.
- Highly positive, supportive relationships were evident in lessons. This encouraged frank and open dialogue; students engaged in discussions with interest and maturity.

- Effective use of questioning by teachers probed students' thinking and helped them to articulate their views. Teachers demonstrated confidence in tackling potentially controversial issues and gained good responses from students.
- In an outstanding lesson on anti-Semitism, resources were skilfully selected and the approach was suitably varied, ranging from personal reflection from the teacher, which enthralled students, to direct teaching of the facts and underpinning knowledge, and discussion of the issues and implications before moving on to consider examples of persecution continuing today. The atmosphere created was electric and made a powerful impact on students' learning.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development, an issue recognised by the school. This requires consolidation and the development of an approach that recognises all of students' contributions to the subject, including discussions within lessons and their participation in active citizenship.

#### Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is satisfactory with some good elements.

- Citizenship is provided through various strands: a core programme through personal and social education (PSE) at Key Stage 3 supplemented by a cross-curricular approach, with further contributions made within tutorials and assemblies. However, the emphasis in the core programme is weighted towards PSE and although the cross-curricular approach is promising, at present this does not yet constitute a coherent programme. The current focus on mapping the range and content has resulted in insufficient focus on agreeing how the subject's key concepts and processes are met.
- At Key Stage 4, provision is good. An appropriate balance of core provision and cross-curricular contributions, notable in humanities, has been secured. Here, provision is strong and effective, and confident teachers consistently deliver citizenship objectives well.
- There is potential in the current model of delivery and some strengths are emerging. However, it requires careful coordination to ensure that the programme is balanced and coherent, enabling students at both key stages to receive their entitlement and achieve progression.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory.

- Good leadership and a clear vision for the subject are demonstrated at a senior level. The work and commitment of the deputy headteacher have been instrumental in establishing a core programme at Key Stage 4 and building a team of teachers to deliver this.

- The school's overarching ethos and atmosphere support the principles of active citizenship. There is a clear commitment to engage with students, encourage them to discuss and reflect issues and make good use of the students' voice.
- Self-evaluation of provision and outcomes is realistic and accurate. There is recognition of the aspects to improve, including the need to secure the monitoring of teaching and learning in the subject. The quality assurance processes here are not as thorough as those established across the rest of the curriculum. Similarly, the tracking of students' progress and achievement in citizenship is not in line with the whole-school system for this, which is another area for improvement.

### Subject issue

The development of students' political understanding is satisfactory. (see: 'Achievement and enjoyment of learning')

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- clarifying the citizenship curriculum and programme of study to ensure coherence and progression
- improving the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning
- developing thorough and meaningful assessment procedures.

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

Judith Matharu  
Her Majesty's Inspector