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Mr P Grady
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Dear Mr Grady

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 11 and 12 February 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 and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is good and students' personal development is outstanding.

- Students have good knowledge and understanding of the key areas of the citizenship curriculum. They are skilled at making links between issues and concepts as they come across them in different subjects. For example, students in an English lesson reflected on their knowledge of the civil rights movement in 1960's America when deconstructing a poem; students in a history lesson reflected on their knowledge of communism when exploring McCarthyism.

- Students demonstrate good skills in enquiry, communication and critical thinking. They engage very well with their lessons, where they are encouraged to learn independently and creatively. Some have opportunities to develop skills in advocacy as representatives on the student council. The council is democratically elected and students know who their representatives are and how to contact them. They have had some success in improving the school environment and are currently being consulted on the school's behaviour policy.
- Students' skills in participating and taking responsible action in citizenship are excellent. Active citizenship plays a very large part in the school's curriculum. Students act as peer mentors, prefects, recycling champions and librarians. They are involved in staff appointments and lead charity fundraising activities. Beyond the school, they link with students in schools in other parts of Bury as well as Namibia and South Africa.

Quality of teaching of citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Teachers who contribute to citizenship through other areas of the curriculum demonstrate good subject knowledge of citizenship. The subject knowledge of those who deliver the curriculum through off-timetable 'stop the clock' days is more variable. However, these teachers are deployed to their strengths and are supported well.
- Teaching involves a wide range of approaches. Technology is used effectively to add pace and interest; students are encouraged to research topics through the internet and do so discerningly. Topical resources are commonplace in lessons; students are confident that they can discuss current issues in the classroom and that their voices and opinions will be heard. Teachers understand how to deal with sensitive and controversial issues and encourage such discussions. For example, a project on China explored human rights and one-party communism as well as customs, celebrations and traditions.
- Teachers know how well students are progressing in humanities subjects where citizenship issues are taught, but they are less aware of how well they are progressing in relation to citizenship attainment levels. The school is looking at a range of ways of making assessment and reporting more rigorous and informative.
- Visiting groups, such as non-governmental organisations, theatre in education and other voluntary organisations, make up an important part of the curriculum, enhancing the work of the department.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good.

- The current provision of seven 'stop the clock' days for citizenship and personal, social and health education is much enhanced by citizenship

work in tutorial time, assemblies, humanities and religious studies lessons, and through a wide range of school and extra-curricular activities. These include the Holocaust day, Fair Trade Friday, eco school work, multi-faith day, trips to the town hall and the Houses of Parliament and community action projects. The pattern of provision is reviewed regularly and improved in the light of evaluation and analysis.

- The curriculum is strong on human rights, identity and diversity but less strong on the functioning of parliament and the European Union. Planning is not fully coordinated and the subject leader is yet to complete an audit and evaluation of cross-curricular provision. Nevertheless, the curriculum is coherent and students can make links between aspects of their learning.
- Option choices at Key Stage 4 restrict access to the curriculum to some degree. Those who study history, geography or humanities at GCSE benefit from more in-depth study of related issues. However, the Key Stage 3 curriculum provides a very firm foundation in citizenship across the curriculum which, together with religious studies at Key Stage 4, realises most citizenship objectives.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are catered for through appropriate tasks and learning support. There are plans to meet their needs even more effectively in the future through citizenship-focused modules in a foundation curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is good.

- The quality of subject leadership is excellent. Within the resources available, the subject leader discharges the role very well. Subject planning, review, schemes of work and lesson plans are of high quality. The school has responded very well to the changes and opportunities of the revised curriculum, particularly at Key Stage 3, which has considerably enhanced provision. The subject leader has a very good understanding of the strengths and areas of priority for the department, is very ambitious, and strives for excellence in everything the department does. There is good capacity to improve.
- Resources are satisfactory in terms of materials and funding for external input. However, curriculum provision is dependent on a range of enhancement activities which are not fully embedded into the citizenship entitlement. Dedicated time for leadership and management has been enhanced by the temporary appointment of a second in department. The subject leader has had some subject-specific training; few of the other teachers delivering citizenship lessons have received training.
- The school has made excellent links between its citizenship education and the duty to promote community cohesion. Engagement with the local and international communities, through school linking and other activities, is very well developed and constantly building on good practice.

- Monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in citizenship are limited and do not systematically inform improvement planning and meet teachers' professional development needs. Unlike others with similar responsibilities, the subject leader is unable to meet regularly and formally with the team of teachers to plan and review the curriculum.

Subject issue: students' political understanding is good.

- Students have a good understanding of the basic principles of democratic politics and many understand the wider range of political systems and ideologies. Most have studied the role of MPs, although they have a more limited understanding of how parliament functions, including how laws are made. They know about the range of political parties, including those at the extreme of politics, and they are enthusiastic about discussing political issues of the day.
- Teaching about politics appears in many areas of the curriculum including 'stop the clock' days, religious studies, history, geography, and through visits to places of interest, such as the town hall and the House of Commons. However, the curriculum is not systematically planned to ensure all students have full entitlement to an in-depth political education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring full curriculum entitlement through systematic planning
- ensuring sufficient resources in terms of dedicated teaching time, management time and staff training
- developing effective strategies for the assessment of learning and progress
- developing effective systems for the monitoring and evaluation of teaching in citizenship.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop citizenship in the school.

As I explained previously, 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