

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Dr P Parkin
Headteacher
Colne Park High School
Venables Avenue
Colne
Lancashire
BB8 7DP

Dear Dr Parkin

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 8 and 9 March 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 six lessons and two assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is inadequate.

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is inadequate.

- Students' knowledge and understanding of key areas of the citizenship curriculum are extremely limited. They have some experience of democratic practices through the election of the student council. However, they have very little understanding of political, legal and human rights; the justice system; the role of parliament; democratic and non-democratic processes; the role of the media in forming public opinion; the allocation of public finances; the roles and responsibilities of employers and

employees; migration and asylum; the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

- Students in Year 7 have explored the United Nations millennium development goals and Year 9 students have studied the American Civil Rights Movement. In students' books, there is some evidence of work on pressure groups and voluntary organisations, national and regional assemblies and age-related legal rights. However, the work is patchy and lacks depth. Students have developed a deeper understanding of global inequalities and sustainability in geography and science and political awareness in history.
- Opportunities for students to develop their skills in enquiry and communication in citizenship are limited. Although schemes of work and lesson plans appear to enable students to explore topical issues through research, discussion and debate, the lesson aims are insufficiently challenging for students to make good progress. There is no evidence that students are building on learning from primary school.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Teaching ranges from good to inadequate. In the best lessons, teachers demonstrate good subject understanding and students make good progress through informed discussion. However, in other lessons, teachers lack confidence in their subject knowledge which adversely affects their ability to use questioning to promote good learning and progress.
- Teachers adopt a wide range of activities and students engage well with them. Interactive whiteboards are used to maintain pace and interest. However, learning objectives are often inappropriate, indirectly related to the key issues and at a very basic level. In some lessons, there is too little reflection on previous knowledge and little new knowledge is imparted.
- Teachers have not received training on how to teach sensitive and controversial issues. Consequently, topics such as immigration and asylum have not been taught well; there are plans to tackle identity and diversity in more depth in the future.
- Assessment of students' learning during some lessons is inadequate and does not inform future planning. The school has begun to formally assess and report on learning in citizenship and written assessments are in place.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum that was introduced in September 2009 meets statutory requirements at both key stages, although some areas are not covered in enough detail. Insufficient attention is given to political literacy at Key Stage 3 and there is little in the programme on the role of voluntary organisations and pressure groups, including trade unions. Plans are in

place to tackle other weaker elements such as identity and diversity, the European Union and the Commonwealth.

- Those taking health and social care, history or geography are better informed than their peers on many key issues in citizenship. Where citizenship issues are covered in religious education, such as debating topical issues from faith perspectives, some of the citizenship objectives are well met.
- Currently, all students follow the same programme of study in citizenship and teaching assistants are available, where appropriate, to assist those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. There are plans to introduce alternative citizenship modules for students for whom the current arrangements are inappropriate.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Resources are sufficient in terms of time, staff responsibility, staffing and materials. The school provided an additional budget to set up the new citizenship programme. The time allocated for the subject leader to carry out her role is the same as for other heads of faculty and there are opportunities for the team to meet to review and plan. However, the resource for training has been insufficient. The subject leader has not had subject-specific training for citizenship and only one temporary teacher on the citizenship team has received such training.
- The school has been very late in responding to the introduction of citizenship as a compulsory National Curriculum subject and is at the very early stages of monitoring and evaluating attainment, achievement and the quality of teaching. An internal faculty review, in November 2009, judged the citizenship provision to be satisfactory overall, with good capacity to improve. This reflects inspection findings. However, the self-evaluation overestimated students' achievement, since the recent improvements in provision have not yet had sufficient impact on achievement.
- Links have been made with a local faith centre to promote community cohesion but these arrangements only affect very small numbers of students. Plans are in place for a community cohesion day and a group of Muslim youth workers visit the school as part of the 'Building Bridges' programme. A range of plans is being implemented and there is good capacity to improve from a very low starting point.

Subject issue: students' political understanding

- Provision for political understanding has been poor. The revised curriculum includes some political literacy at Key Stage 3 but this is insufficient to prepare students well for the GCSE short course. Teachers lack confidence in teaching the political dimensions of citizenship.

- Students have a limited understanding of the basic principles of democratic politics. They do not know about policy differences of political parties, are insufficiently well informed to be able to discuss the political issues of the day with confidence and have few opportunities to do so.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring the subject leader and citizenship team receive specific training in citizenship
- ensuring learning objectives and activities in lessons are appropriate and challenging
- improving students' political literacy through more effective curriculum opportunities.

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