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Mr D Hudson
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Dear Mr Hudson

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 16 and 17 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 members of the leadership team, key staff and three groups of students; observation of two meetings between school council representatives and staff; observation of a peer-mentors' meeting; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' reflective diaries and reports to parents; and observation of parts of seven lessons and two form tutor sessions.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good.

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are good.

- Students at all key stages, as well as in the sixth form, demonstrate good knowledge and understanding of key aspects, including rights and responsibilities, environmental issues, the legal and justice system and identity and diversity in the UK. They have a good grasp of democracy and

the workings of government, which are covered from different angles in various subject areas.

- Students demonstrate particularly good knowledge and understanding of identity and diversity, having explored a range of issues in some detail. In a successful Year 7 lesson in PSHE, students tackled issues around disability and discrimination with interest. Their teacher prompted them to express their own views in considering how attitudes to disability can vary.
- Post-16 citizenship provision is strong and effective. Students benefit from the citizenship dimension within General Studies and value the many opportunities for discussion and debate in exploring their views.
- The school's commitment to, and use of the student voice, is exemplary. Students are widely consulted and contribute significantly to decision-making within the school. They value this and can demonstrate clear evidence of their impact on school policy and practice. For example, imaginative plans to improve opportunities outdoors and facilitate active lunchtimes are being implemented following students' work on this project. They get excellent opportunities to volunteer and demonstrate responsible action across the whole school and many do so. This work includes, a variety of students' councils, an environmental group, peer mentoring, participation in the local Youth Cabinet, sports leadership activities within and beyond the school, volunteering through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme, and presenting 'EditNews: news without the waffle!' which is broadcast weekly in the school. Consequently, students' personal development through active participation is outstanding.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Teaching observed was consistently good, illustrating a number of key strengths. These include good planning to meet citizenship objectives, the use of a variety of stimulating resources, including information and communication technology, and deployment of a range of interesting learning activities. Highly supportive relationships were evident in lessons. This encouraged useful dialogue; students enjoy such opportunities and offer their opinions with interest and enthusiasm.
- Teachers demonstrate confidence in tackling potentially controversial issues, gaining thoughtful responses from students. For example, in a successful lesson with Year 13 on the various social and cultural issues arising from war, students were encouraged to express their views and did so with insight and maturity.
- In lessons, teachers check students' understanding through a variety of means and reinforce learning when necessary. Useful peer- and self-assessment activities are used widely.
- Assessment requires development using the eight-level scale, an issue recognised by the school. At present, tutors note students' active contributions well and some good self-assessment takes place in PSHE.

However, this requires extending to meet requirements and fully illustrate the extent of students' knowledge, skills and understanding in the subject.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good.

- Citizenship is provided through a complex curriculum model incorporating various strands: core units within personal, social and health education (PSHE) delivered by a specialist team, supplemented by a wide-ranging cross-curricular approach, with further contributions made through 'drop down' days and form tutor session. Together, this represents a comprehensive programme for the subject that is effective in promoting good learning.
- The contributions from other subjects are essential as curriculum time within PSHE is tightly constrained. These contributions are often good, but occasionally vary in the depth of learning developed. Effective work in religious studies, history, geography, enterprise and business studies adds significantly to the citizenship programme.
- Occasionally, opportunities to fully explore the potential for learning within the citizenship context are missed. For example, in a geography lesson, students learned with interest about the factors causing the earthquake in Haiti, showing empathy and good understanding. They touched on some of the issues concerning human responses to the disaster but did not go on to explore the role and responsibilities of governments or voluntary agencies in responding to the crisis.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- A clear vision for the subject is evident. Strong, effective leadership is evident from you and the subject leader. The subject is valued; its importance to the life of the school and the preferred method of delivery have been considered carefully.
- The commitment of a number of teachers has been secured. They demonstrate ideas and energy in their willingness to contribute to citizenships in a variety of ways. These colleagues are innovative, understand the connections with their own various responsibilities and are keen to make the appropriate links to reinforce these with students.
- The subject leader is hard-working, committed and enthusiastic. She has an accurate understanding of the strengths and weaknesses in the current provision and is aware of the priorities for further development. However, the subject leader's current whole-school role is demanding and limited time is available at present to develop the citizenship agenda further or to develop staff expertise. This is an issue you are aware of and plan to resolve.

- The leadership and management of sixth-form citizenship are good. Strong commitment to citizenship learning for all sixth formers leading to good outcomes for students is evident.
- Although the monitoring of PSHE is good, at present, these processes are not sufficiently extended to monitor the quality of provision and outcomes across the wider curriculum.

Subject issue

The development of students' political understanding is good.

- Students demonstrate a good understanding of the basic principles of democratic politics. They can describe the key features of the system in the UK at a national and local level and have reasonable knowledge of the major political parties and their policy characteristics. Students also have some knowledge of systems of government beyond the UK. Most importantly, they are able to identify instances when they and/or their peers have taken action to bring about change.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- completing an audit of the provision across the school to ensure depth and progression in learning
- developing and embedding appropriate assessment procedures
- extending monitoring procedures to include the full range of provision.

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

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector