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Mrs P Ward
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Ward

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 23 and 24 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 nine lessons, a student Resolve session and a sixth-form debate.

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

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are good. Students' skills in participating and taking responsible action are outstanding.

- Students have a good knowledge of most aspects of the citizenship curriculum. This includes knowledge of the criminal justice system, the workings of Parliament and the electoral process. They are interested in political issues and well informed about current affairs. They understand

the difference between local and national government and have a working knowledge of the roles of the European Union, the Commonwealth and the United Nations.

- Students show a keen interest in learning about sustainability and the finite nature of resources. During the visit, there was a whole-school focus for 'Green Week' and every lesson for every subject had a 'green' agenda. Students discuss the importance of human rights in many areas of the curriculum and are well aware of the dangers of prejudice and the inequalities that some people face. They are well informed about the diverse nature of British society.
- Students are well aware of the importance of freedom of speech and the role of the media, although some of them deplore the more trivial aspects of press freedom and have a sophisticated awareness of the need to verify the truth of some of what is written or broadcast.
- Students have very well-developed skills of enquiry, communication and critical thinking. They research topics thoroughly, often with an international dimension and have good skills of debate and discussion.
- Students make an outstanding contribution to their school and local communities and have excellent experience of the democratic process. They are involved in a range of school-based councils and action groups, and are members of the National Youth Parliament and the Youth Cabinet. The action groups include Safe Havens, an action group initiated by Year 8 students in 2006 who wanted to do more to support and protect vulnerable students. They have formalised their purpose by producing core values and policies. New volunteers are recruited annually. So successful has this been that they have been awarded a grant by the Youth Services, and, after running two successful conferences, are now helping other schools to set up similar groups. They have gained a number of awards for their work including the Area/Assembly People's Champion Award and Diana Memorial Award. Resolve is a student-led arena for restorative justice. Forty six students are trained to deal with bullying or conflict issues. Further, the school has links with schools in Finland, Greece, France, Spain, Germany and Sicily.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Teaching is lively and innovative. Lessons are enhanced regularly with music and relevant images. Teachers plan lessons that are suited to students' varying abilities and progress is brisk. They have good subject knowledge and also use local professionals who bring special expertise to the citizenship curriculum.
- Planning is effective because teachers plan lessons, which inspire, build up students' confidence and exploit their interests. Citizenship objectives are built into all lesson plans wherever feasible.

- Teachers put a good focus on developing students' independent learning skills and provide numerous opportunities for them to use information and communication technology (ICT) for research and presentation. The development of enquiry skills and use of discussion and debate are central to lesson planning.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported across the curriculum and are able to make good progress.
- Assessment procedures are presently limited. The school is introducing formal assessment arrangements in summer 2010. Students do not always receive enough feedback on their work in citizenship, both when it is taught discretely and when it is taught through other subjects. Students are not as aware as they could be about how well they are doing and how to improve their work.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good. The impact of the school's specialism as a language college is outstanding.

- There is a core citizenship programme at all key stages and the curriculum meets statutory requirements.
- There is currently some inconsistency in the quality of provision in Key Stage 4 because of the variation in the subject choices made by students. Those who choose history, for example, will have a greater understanding of some aspects of the citizenship curriculum. The school has recognised this weakness and is introducing GCSE citizenship for Key Stage 4 students from September 2010.
- The impact of the school's specialism is outstanding. As a language college it has links with numerous other schools in the UK and abroad. Through the Comenius project, Wath is paired with schools in Finland, France, Germany, Sicily, Greece, Spain and Hungary. Links are currently developing with two schools in Qatar and Doha. An international ethos is promoted throughout the school and students learn to think of themselves as citizens of the world. Sixth-form students complete work experience in France and Germany. The school offers bespoke language courses for staff at a German company based in Rotherham.
- Nearer to home, students work with members of the community through the Silver Surfers and other community groups and have raised money for three local parks. Links with many primary schools are strong; Year 8 students are now returning to their previous primary schools to assess ICT skills.
- The specialism results in students achieving well above average standards in languages and well above average levels of participation in citizenship.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are outstanding.

- A vision for citizenship is at the heart of the school's work and threaded through all policy and planning documentation. Such a high priority is set on the importance of students' views that a senior leadership post has been created to support and manage all aspects of student voice.
- Subject leadership is strong, backed by a member of the senior leadership team. Together they are effective in ensuring the quality of planning, teaching and learning and in providing training and support for the delivery of the citizenship curriculum.
- Leadership in the specialism is outstanding. The school looks outwards to the wider world and many students have opportunities to travel abroad and to meet people from many different backgrounds and cultures.
- The school ensures that every student engages in some form of community action at local, national or international level.
- The chair of governors, along with other governors, oversees curriculum development and is passionate about empowering young people to know how to get involved in their local communities, how to bring about change and make a difference. Provision for citizenship and the impact of the specialism result in students making an impressive contribution to community cohesion.
- Self-evaluation is accurate and perceptive. The school has identified the gaps in provision and is aware that academic skills need to be recognised more formally. Capacity to improve is good because of increased time being allocated to academic citizenship next year and the introduction of GCSE at Key Stage 4.

Subject issue: student's political understanding

- Students have a good understanding of politics and are well informed about current affairs. In this election year, they are keen to hear from all the main parties and have invited representatives to speak at the school. They are well informed about, and interested in, important matters such as the economy, immigration and education.
- The students can identify the difference between national and local government and have some understanding of different styles of government in other parts of the world.
- Students have an excellent record of identifying what needs to be done and organising action themselves, such as their initiatives in creating Safe Havens and Resolve. Some students have joined a local anti-Fascist group to combat what they see as a rise in support for the racist agenda.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more effective assessment procedures so that students know how well they are doing in academic citizenship.

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 Straw
Additional Inspector