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Mrs E Silson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Silson

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 2 and 3 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 students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of parts of 10 lessons, a coaching session and two assemblies.

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

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are good.

- Work scrutiny and the school's records indicate that students attain broadly average standards in citizenship at present, and their progress and achievement overall are good. By Key Stage 4, students demonstrate good understanding of the subject's key concepts and are confident and articulate in expressing their views. Key Stage 3 students have a

satisfactory understanding of democracy and the workings of government; by Key Stage 4, their grasp of these are good, largely due to the work undertaken in political literacy in Year 10.

- Students demonstrate particularly good knowledge and understanding of identity and diversity. They speak proudly of the diversity of their school population; they are respectful and thoughtful in their observations of this.
- Students value the opportunities for discussion in lessons and their attitudes to citizenship are positive. They behave consistently well and appreciate the strong relationships enjoyed with teachers. Students feel that the use of the student voice is valued in school. This gives them confidence in voicing their opinions about various aspects of school life and how these might be improved.
- There are excellent opportunities for students to participate in leadership and demonstrate responsible action within the school and beyond. The school's use of the student voice is significant and effective, notably through the work of the influential Junior Leadership Team and a range of other student groups that are consulted about school issues. The opportunities to volunteer and take positive action are extensive across the school. Consequently, students' personal development through active citizenship is outstanding. In particular, citizenship opportunities in the sixth form, through involvement in a wide range of enrichment activities, including charity fundraising, volunteer action groups such as Envision, V Award, and work with the local elderly, are extensive and promote outstanding personal and social skills.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Teaching is 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. The warm and supportive relationships evident in lessons encourage open and honest dialogue. Students offer their opinions respectfully and confidently.
- Most teachers achieve a good balance between direct teaching and opportunities for student discussion. Occasionally, teachers dominate discussions and, as a result, some opportunities for students to explore the relevant issues and form their own judgements are diminished.
- Students work cooperatively in pairs and groups. They enjoy expressing and justifying their opinions. The small coaching groups facilitate such opportunities well.
- Assessment is satisfactory at present. This requires development and consolidation using the eight-level scale, an issue recognised by the school. The work undertaken in assessment in PSE and RE is a positive step. This needs extending to include other areas. Further, the means to

assess the excellent active citizenship evident across the school requires exploration.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good.

- Citizenship learning is provided through various strands: core units within personal and social education, supplemented by cross-curricular contributions and work undertaken in coaching sessions. Overall, this represents a comprehensive, if complex, programme for the subject.
- There is strength in the current whole-school approach. Overall, the programme results in good outcomes for students, who gain much from their varied experiences.
- The contributions made by other subjects across the curriculum are increasing. In particular, effective work undertaken in religious education adds significantly to the programme. There is potential evident in English, science and geography and through the assembly and coaching programme to complement the provision further. Some subjects require greater support in establishing how citizenship objectives might be delivered more thoroughly through their areas; at present, these are sometimes superficial.
- Although an audit has been completed, this does not clarify the full range of provision, whether there is potential for depth in learning or how progression is secured from Key Stage 3 to 4.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- Strong, effective leadership is evident from yourself and your senior team. There is a clear vision and rationale for the subject, the chosen method of delivery and the importance of citizenship learning to the ethos and wider life of the school.
- The school's commitment to engaging the student voice, working in partnership with students and promoting the value of active citizenship is impressive. The clear commitment to build a strong and cohesive school community is most effectively realised.
- There is good subject expertise and support for the subject evident in the middle leadership team. The support for the new subject leader from an experienced specialist is effective. The subject leader is enthusiastic and capable and has ideas on how to develop provision further.
- Self-evaluation of provision and outcomes is accurate. There is recognition of the aspects which require development, including the need to secure consistency of approach in the coaching sessions and ensure that the monitoring of students' progress and achievement is thorough.

Subject issue

The development of students' political understanding is good.

- By Key Stage 4, students demonstrate a good understanding of the principles of democracy and how government works. They can describe the key features of the system in the UK at a national and local level and contrast this with other systems across the world. They demonstrate a good understanding of the major political parties and their policy characteristics. Most importantly, students can draw on examples where they or their peers have taken action to tackle issues.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- auditing provision to establish that it covers all elements and secures depth and progression in learning for students
- developing assessment procedures to ensure that requirements are met and all of students' achievements are recognised.

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