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Mr R Halford
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Halford

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme – citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 and 13 May 2010 to look at work in citizenship.

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 observation of eight part-lessons, three interviews each with groups of students and with staff.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is satisfactory.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is satisfactory.

- Students' understanding of the key areas of the citizenship curriculum is variable, and better in Key Stage 4 than in Key Stage 3. Students in Key Stage 3 tackle a wide range of issues in citizenship, but this often lacks depth. Their understanding is strongest on human rights, prejudice and discrimination, fairtrade, and the role of the media in influencing public opinion. However, they have limited understanding of the role of parliament, the criminal justice system and historical and current influences on Britain's diversity.
- Students in Key Stage 4 demonstrate good political literacy and media awareness. Those who choose citizenship-related subjects, such as history, geography and film studies GCSE and critical thinking at AS level, have a more in-depth understanding than others. Because all students take the GCSE in religious education, they all have the opportunity to

engage in informed debates on topical and controversial issues from different faith perspectives.

- Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities receive effective support in lessons from teaching assistants. Students in the Inclusion Centre have produced some good work on faith and culture, homelessness and the role of charities. More able and gifted students who attend AS-level critical thinking lessons demonstrate an in-depth understanding of the key issues of democracy and justice, rights and responsibilities and identity and diversity.
- Learning about active citizenship makes a good contribution to aspects of the students' personal, moral and social development. The majority demonstrate positive attitudes towards citizenship and are willing participants in taking responsible action. Good examples of this are peer-mentoring activities, junior and community sports leadership, primary liaison work, the Eco group, paired reading and charity fundraising.

Quality of teaching of citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is satisfactory.

- In most lessons, teachers are able to maintain students' interest. Interactive whiteboards are used well to add pace and engage the class. Students particularly enjoy the opportunities to discuss topical issues. In the best lessons, teachers use questioning well to challenge students' views and further develop their understanding. In less successful lessons, students are encouraged to share uninformed views, which teachers do not challenge as they lack in-depth knowledge of the subject.
- In Key Stage 3 lessons, not enough time is allocated to cover the topic sufficiently or to provide appropriate rigour and challenge. Where citizenship is taught in other subjects, the work does not always bear close enough relation to the National Curriculum programme of study.
- Much of students' written work includes worksheets and quizzes and does not meet the standard of work expected in other subjects. Teachers are beginning to understand the assessment level descriptors for citizenship but these are not consistently applied. There is little evidence of students developing their citizenship experience gained in primary school and teachers are not yet accurately assessing their progress within and between key stages.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements overall but, at Key Stage 3 it is insufficient to enable in-depth coverage of the National Curriculum requirements. Limited attention is paid to the criminal justice system, parliamentary democracy, the role of public services and the voluntary sector and issues related to British diversity, including the European Union

and the Commonwealth. These topics are sometimes covered in other subjects but the work is not taught or assessed in line with citizenship subject requirements. The increased curriculum time at Key Stage 4 allows for more rigour. However, much of the work is less challenging than required because students have not developed a good base in the topic at Key Stage 3.

- The delivery of the programme through other subjects is not monitored sufficiently well to ensure a coherent programme overall. For example, in religious education at Key Stage 3, students explore crime and punishment and study a range of faiths, but the work does not relate directly to the citizenship objectives. This improves at Key Stage 4 where students undertake more sustained pieces of writing on a range of topical and controversial issues.
- Students have opportunities to engage in active citizenship but it is not a curriculum expectation for all and is not formally assessed. A range of subject-related trips, such as those to the House of Commons and the slavery museum, provide good extra-curricular opportunities for some students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is satisfactory.

- The school has identified an enthusiastic faculty leader who has the capacity to lead and support others. Provision for citizenship is monitored and reviewed within the faculty and there is a sound understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement. The citizenship team has received subject-specific professional development but it has not focused sufficiently well on the development of their subject knowledge.
- Subject and senior leaders and managers are motivated to seek further improvement in citizenship. They are beginning to assess the progress of students and have plans in place to monitor and evaluate the quality of teaching and learning more effectively.
- Resources are appropriate in terms of materials but the time resource for discrete citizenship at Key Stage 3 is insufficient. The subject leader does not have enough time to meet with the teaching team to develop materials and review teaching and learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring sufficient curriculum time is available for citizenship in Key Stage 3
- developing assessment of learning in citizenship
- improving monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in 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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector