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Mr R Baylis
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Baylis

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 June 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 interviews with key staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of parts of five lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is satisfactory with some significant strengths in elements of the school's work.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in citizenship are satisfactory with some good features.

- At present, it is difficult to assess students' achievements in the subject due to the current lack of formal monitoring of progress. Students at Key Stage 3 have a good grasp of rights and responsibilities, and democracy and justice. These are reinforced across several curriculum areas. Several subjects provide good opportunities for students to explore issues around identity and diversity, although these do not always explore the current context in the UK today.
- There is less evidence of substantial work on the justice system, the role and influence of the media and pressure groups or the work of the EU.

- Political awareness and understanding are satisfactory at Key Stage 3 and are reinforced by events such as students' own hustings before the recent Election. Achievement in the GCSE course is good. Results have improved dramatically to above national performance due to the subject leader's determined drive. Students studying this course have a good grasp of the subject and are comfortable in discussing their views.
- The school's use of the student voice is a strength. Students are proud of their contributions and feel that their voices are valued and have a genuine impact. For example, they are consulted about staff appointments, various school initiatives and charity fundraising decisions. This work is reinforcing their understanding of representation and accountability to their peers.
- The strength in the school's work arises from the excellent opportunities for students to demonstrate responsible action within the school and beyond. Consequently, students' personal development through active citizenship is outstanding. The many examples of this include: the work of the school council in campaigning about traffic issues in the neighbourhood, the gardening and eco groups, extensive sixth-form volunteering and the work of the Head Boy team. Students appreciate that the school provides a rounded experience in developing personal and social skills in addition to academic qualifications.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good overall.

- Teaching observed was consistently good, illustrating a number of strengths. The strong features were: good relationships with students resulting in a positive learning climate; good use of modern technologies to stimulate learning; effective classroom management strategies; high expectations of students' work and contributions to lessons; and willingness to plan citizenship objectives and realise these in lessons.
- Teachers identify citizenship learning in their planning and mostly this is realised. Occasionally, opportunities to reflect on issues with topical relevance are lost. This limits students' ability to reflect on current issues and make the learning relevant to their lives. Students indicate that they enjoy opportunities to share their views.
- Teachers provide good ongoing feedback in lessons and encourage students to contribute. However, formal assessment in terms of citizenship learning is underdeveloped.
- Discrete teaching at Key Stage 4 is good. The subject leader, who teaches this course, is lively and well informed, inspiring interest in the subject and providing a good platform for further studies, such as A-level government and politics.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is satisfactory.

- Citizenship provision is delivered through a variety of curriculum activities. This involves cross-curricular provision, some time in tutorial sessions and the use of flexible learning days. Some of this provides valuable contributions to students' citizenship learning. Other contributions are less successful and have only tenuous connections to the subject. The school does not have an overall picture of provision as it is not currently mapped and analysed in any detail. Provision overall may be stronger than first appears; however, this has not been clearly identified. This makes curriculum planning difficult to achieve.
- Some good contributions are evident across the curriculum. Many teachers are committed to including citizenship learning within their subject areas, making the subject real for students and considerably enhancing their understanding of citizenship concepts. For example, in a highly successful lesson combining art and citizenship, the teacher drew on issues around identity and diversity to enhance students' understanding and appreciation of art forms, resulting in some highly imaginative responses.
- Curriculum resources are tightly constrained and this is limiting the extension of a range of up-to-date, relevant citizenship materials.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are satisfactory.

- At a whole-school level, some strong elements are evident. The school ethos supports the importance of active citizenship and the significance of 'making a difference'. This is appreciated by students, who take such commitments seriously and make considerable efforts to get involved.
- The subject leader is committed, enthusiastic and hard working. He has made a significant impact in raising the profile of the subject across the school. He has also improved performance at GCSE and been particularly successful in establishing a range of active citizenship projects that have motivated students to take positive community action.
- Despite some significant strengths, there are some weaker elements. Assessment is underdeveloped and behind schedule in terms of the requirements. Some promising work by the subject leader himself, and in religious education, is underway, but this is not securely established across the wider curriculum. Some good monitoring of students' participation in taking responsible action takes place. However, the current monitoring of students' progress overall is limited, due to the lack of thorough assessment procedures.
- The subject leader's self-evaluation is accurate. There is honest appraisal of the aspects requiring development, including the need to complete an audit of provision and develop comprehensive assessment procedures with the wider staff team.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- mapping the current provision against the citizenship requirements to:
 - ensure full coverage that meets each student's entitlement

- enable a curriculum plan to be established that provides depth and progression from Key Stage 3 to 4.
- establishing thorough assessment procedures to monitor students' progress in the subject.

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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Judith Matharu
Her Majesty's Inspector