

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



23 March 2007

Mr A J Smith
Headteacher
Dartford Grammar School
West Hill
Dartford
Kent
DA1 2HW

Dear Mr Smith

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 19 and 20 March 2007 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 any evidence of provision for the part of the programme of study concerned with Britain's diversity.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons and other activities.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

The school places the broad notion of citizenship at the heart of its ethos and its curriculum, and is rightly proud that students acquire a strong sense of their responsibilities as citizens in local, national and international contexts. Although there are weaknesses in the school's implementation of National Curriculum citizenship, these are outweighed by the quality and range of extra-curricular opportunities that enable all students to develop the skills and attributes associated with good, active citizenship. The school's language college status, and its implementation of the International Baccalaureate (IB) both in the sixth form and in the rest of the school through the IB Middle

Years Programme, also make a significant contribution in equipping students with the skills and knowledge to participate effectively in an increasingly complex, globalised world.

Achievement and standards

- Students at the school come from the top 25 per cent of the ability range. Students produce little written work that relates directly to the National Curriculum programme of study for citizenship . However, written work from other subjects seen during the visit, which the school identified as contributing to the citizenship curriculum, was of a very high standard. Students have many opportunities to carry out research and communicate their findings, both orally and in writing, and they do this to a high standard.
- Many students spoke eloquently about issues connected to the wider concept of citizenship. Students interviewed during the visit were articulate and thoughtful. However, their knowledge and understanding of some aspects of the citizenship curriculum, particularly in respect of contemporary events, were inconsistent. Although some students displayed a strong grasp of current affairs, others had weaker levels of political literacy.

Quality of teaching and learning

- The small amount of teaching seen during the visit was very good. Lessons were conducted at a rapid pace, most students were actively involved, and aspects of lessons concerning the development of citizenship skills were good.
- Discrete citizenship teaching takes place in some lessons as part of the personal, social and health education (PSHE) programme. None of these lessons, which are delivered by form teachers rather than subject specialists, were observed during the visit. Evidence from interviews with students, and from scrutiny of a small sample of students' work, suggest that the effectiveness of these lessons in covering aspects of the citizenship programme of study is variable.
- Assessment in citizenship is weak. Although the school fulfils its obligation to report to parents on their children's progress in the subject at the end of Key Stage 3, the evidence on which such assessment is based is insubstantial. There is no discrete assessment in citizenship at Key Stage 4.

Quality of the curriculum

- The school's curriculum is excellent in respect of the development of generic citizenship skills and attributes, although it has weaknesses with regard to the National Curriculum programme of study.
- Much work has been done to identify where the citizenship curriculum is being covered in other subjects. However, in some cases this

comprehensive audit reveals a misunderstanding of the precise requirements of the National Curriculum. Work covered in other subjects is not clearly identified as citizenship to students, and there is little evidence of specific changes to subject content in order to cover the aspects of citizenship that do not emerge naturally within other subjects, particularly the requirement that students develop citizenship knowledge and skills through reference to topical events.

- At Key Stage 4, significant citizenship content is covered in optional subjects, particularly religious studies. Students do not perceive citizenship as a distinct subject. More importantly, their experience of the subject is somewhat fragmented, without clear progression between the Key Stages.
- Despite these weaknesses, the broader curriculum makes a significant contribution to fulfilling many of the requirements of the statutory curriculum.
- Assemblies frequently feature presentations on citizenship issues, with a particularly strong focus on international relations. Students have many opportunities to develop their skills of participation and responsible participation.
- Student councils are active at each Key Stage, representatives are democratically elected, and a wide range of issues are discussed, ranging from local school concerns to global issues. Students' views are sought and acted upon during internal quality reviews of departments carried out by senior managers.
- The creativity weeks held for each year group have the potential to make a significant contribution to citizenship. Students do much charitable work, and a democratic process has been established to decide which charity should receive monies. Participation in, and completion of, Duke of Edinburgh award schemes are very high.
- As the IB Middle Years Programme develops, students have many opportunities to develop citizenship skills and knowledge, particularly through the community and service area of interaction, but also through the strong focus on intercultural awareness that permeates the IB. Such awareness is also a powerful feature of much of the work in the school arising from its language specialism.

Leadership and management

- School leaders are passionate in their belief that a holistic notion of citizenship is central to the school's curriculum and ethos, and both the taught curriculum and extra-curricular activities are designed to ensure that students become good, responsible, informed citizens.
- Leadership of citizenship as a National Curriculum subject is distributed to a number of managers, under the overall direction of a deputy head. Whilst this works well in the overall context of the school's notion of citizenship, no individual has clear responsibility for pulling together the different strands of the programme of study, ensuring that coverage is

comprehensive, and monitoring the effectiveness of the contributions made by subjects to citizenship.

- School leaders acknowledge that there has been little training for staff in the specific requirements of National Curriculum citizenship.

Subject issue: evidence of provision for the part of the programme of study concerned with Britain's diversity

- The student population is socially and ethnically diverse. Students' understanding of other cultures is reinforced through several aspects of the curriculum, most noticeably through the strong internationalism promoted through the IB programme and through the school's specialism in languages. Respect and tolerance for others are highly prized. However, there is no explicit coverage of this aspect of the programme of study.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that students at both Key Stage 3 and 4 cover all the requirements of the programme of study by reviewing the extent to which coverage in subjects is discernibly citizenship
- improve assessment in citizenship
- review the quality and consistency of citizenship coverage by form tutors in PSHE lessons
- ensure that all staff have a clearer understanding of the precise requirements of National Curriculum 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 Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Thank you again for the warm hospitality offered to me by all during the visit.

Yours sincerely

Alan Hinchliffe
Her Majesty's Inspector