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Mr R J Boothroyd
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Dear Mr Boothroyd

Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 and 23 January 2008 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 provision for teaching and learning about 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 various lessons and activities.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- Students are generally developing the necessary knowledge about the workings of government and the criminal justice system but less so in some aspects of the programme of study, for example the contribution of the voluntary sector.
- Students research effectively. For example, the 'Greenfingers' group made well considered proposals and costings for a trading scheme. It took key decisions as a group and presented its findings convincingly.
- Involvement in community consultations enables students to engage with and learn about local issues.

- School council activities include opportunities for members to meet with and discuss issues with senior staff. An emphasis on students researching and finding solutions and reporting their progress to assemblies helps them understand decision making structures.
- Young people develop skills of enquiry and communication through Drama, English, Citizenship GCSE and the work of the school council. Some continue their research through extended homework or Information and Communication Technology (ICT). In the best examples, students have the confidence to express personal views and opinions, often based on good knowledge.

Quality of teaching and learning of citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall.

- Teachers confidently apply a variety of techniques including small group work, individual support, plenary sessions and the use of ICT.
- Excellent progress and has been made in assessment, aided significantly by GCSE methodology.
- Teachers are willing and able to tackle controversial issues in their teaching, particularly through the ethics and religion department.
- Students have a satisfactory picture of how they are progressing albeit that many are still becoming accustomed to the interpretation and application of assessment levels.
- Marking helps support learning. In the best examples teachers combine comments on the quality of written work with the contribution students makes to class activity.
- The model adopted in Yarborough draws upon a very rich seam of experienced practitioners, generally to good effect. However, experience and confidence varies across staff with examples of some staff having gaps in their knowledge base.
- Learners are generally well engaged in the topic, but some lower attaining students struggle with some concepts.
- Good progress has been made with assessment and reporting to parents. The latter however combines both a citizenship grade and a general tutor grade on progress. This approach leaves citizenship at disadvantage, albeit that the text gives parents a helpful overview.
- Teachers are not sufficiently capitalising on students learning from their 'participation and responsible action' experiences.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Citizenship education has good visibility at all key stages, particularly so at Key Stage 4.
- The school has made significant strides to organise citizenship in such a way as to maximise the skills of the many teachers involved in its delivery. In the main this works well, but in some cases there is a lack of clarity of the precise nature of the citizenship National Curriculum

and programme of study, with teachers unclear of the differences between citizenship, PSHE and careers education.

- The GCSE has brought greater discipline to planning and monitoring. Following its first full year, staff are taking steps to understand where further improvements are to be made.
- Schemes of work provide good guidance for teachers, differentiated across the key stages, but there is some duplication of effort and of resources across them.
- Imminent reforms in the National Curriculum are being approached creatively with good curricular practice to build on. Consideration is being given to improving the integration of citizenship, assessment and a new post-16 citizenship offer.
- Many of the subject audits carried out some time ago against the citizenship curriculum are more descriptive than they are evaluative.

Leadership and management of citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- Managers have committed staffing and time to developing the cross curricular model. The decision to implement the GCSE has strengthened the subject academically and helped bring it parity of esteem.
- Curriculum leadership is provided by year learning co-ordinators supported by assistant heads. Year learning co-ordinators have quickly accumulated good knowledge and understanding of the curriculum. As yet, however, there is not a specialist with oversight of the whole programme.
- Curriculum resources are readily made available but are not sufficiently well organised to support teaching and learning to best effect.
- Managers have placed significant emphasis on monitoring and quality assurance across the full range of subjects. Staff apply these systems well and encourage students to work to achieve their target grades. Such disciplines are also evident in citizenship.
- Senior staff have accurately identified progress and areas of development in citizenship through self evaluation.
- Managers are responsive to INSET needs of staff and some citizenship training activities are programmed. Thus far, however, INSET has been sufficiently strategic.
- Capacity to improve is good.

Subject issue: teaching and learning about Britain's diversity

- Students gain an understanding of the work of international bodies and their relationship with Britain. Ethics and religion encourage them to consider their beliefs and values and to challenge assumptions. Responsive teaching assists student in understanding how perceptions are shaped by their own cultural experiences and by the media. The school is involving students well in developing ambitious international links.

Inclusion

- Teaching staff are mindful of the need to promote race equality in a largely white area. Students gain an understanding of differences among individuals and in the community with issues such as sexuality tackled openly.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- review curriculum leadership
- attend to the gaps in knowledge displayed by some staff
- audit, review and update curriculum resources.

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

Tony Gallagher
Her Majesty's Inspector