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Ms A Walsh
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Dear Ms Walsh

Ofsted 2010-11 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 and 29 April 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 lessons; interviews with groups of students and with staff; and observation of two student council meetings, an assembly and a presentation by the sixth form.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is outstanding.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is outstanding.

- Students have developed an in-depth understanding of democracy, justice, human rights and responsibilities, and identity and diversity. They have very good social and political awareness, although some aspects, such as how laws are made and the workings of the criminal justice system, are not covered in sufficient depth in Key Stage 3. However, awareness of political parties, public finances and understanding of migration and immigration is strong in Key Stage 3.
- Learning in the formal curriculum is brought to life through the numerous opportunities students have to engage with wider local, national and global communities. All are expected to engage in active citizenship projects which are strongly student-initiated, led and evaluated helping to develop their excellent enquiry, communication and presentation skills.

Although there is some evidence that students are building on their learning in primary school, planning for this is at an early stage.

- The student voice is very strong. There are excellent opportunities for all, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, to develop leadership skills. All students are regularly and seriously consulted on issues affecting the school and feel a sense of ownership as a result.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching and learning in citizenship is outstanding.

- Teachers demonstrate expert knowledge and a great enthusiasm for citizenship. All have received in-service training; they plan in teams and teach to their strengths. Where citizenship is taught through other subjects, such as history or geography, teachers demonstrate good understanding of the citizenship programme of study and the assessment requirements. Teachers understand well how to deal with controversial topics and encourage their debate. They use a wide range of topical resources and effectively use interactive whiteboard technology to bring lessons alive.
- The marking of students' work is inconsistent. Progress is reported to parents, and students are generally aware of how well they are doing but, currently, more formal assessment in citizenship takes place in other subjects, such as humanities. Plans are in place to introduce new assessment and recording systems which capture all aspects of students' achievement in citizenship including their engagement in active citizenship.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is outstanding.

- The overall provision includes discrete citizenship; themed events such as Holocaust, fairtrade and United Nations days; an outstanding range of global teaching activities; and cultural exchanges. Assemblies and form time are used extensively to promote these activities. Humanities and other subjects contribute hugely to students' understanding of citizenship issues by putting concepts, such as democracy and sustainability, into context.
- The programme fully meets the requirements for all students. Those with special educational needs and/or disabilities are supported well in mainstream classes and citizenship issues are taught in learning support lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is outstanding.

- The school's vision for citizenship is clear in all areas of its work and in its ethos. Its success at gaining numerous international and citizenship awards is testament to this.

- Subject leadership is effective at all levels. Leaders have an accurate view of the department's strengths and weaknesses and have prioritised developments appropriately. The devolving of responsibilities in this large school has contributed to the sense of ownership and enabled teachers to share best practice. Subject planning, schemes of work and lesson plans are of high quality within the citizenship team and in the supporting subjects.
- Links between the department, the global curriculum, the sports and language specialisms, and community cohesion are seamless. Plans are in place to ensure sustainability of leadership and capacity to improve further is strong.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving strategies to assess learning and progress
- ensuring there is scope for revisiting topics within and between key stages to develop work in-depth and build deeper understanding.

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

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector