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Mrs P Hunter
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Hunter,

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 6 and 7 March 2012 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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of 13 lessons and one learning walk, taking in 12 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good.

Achievement in citizenship

Achievement in citizenship is good.

- One senior leader astutely described citizenship within the school as, 'Not a subject but an ethos'. Respect for diversity and the urge to help others in the local, national and global community are at the very heart of this school.
- Students achieve well due to the well-planned curriculum and support for non-specialist staff. Students speak highly of the 'Listeners' service in school which provides Year 7 students with direct email and personal contact to sixth form students, who also help out in their registration sessions.

- During the visit, an overwhelming majority of students mentioned the visit of Sir Ian McKellan, who gave a whole-school assembly about homophobia. The school has received accreditation from the charity Stonewall for its work to eliminate homophobic language and behaviour; an embedded respect for diversity is a strong feature of the school.

Quality of teaching in citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Some outstanding practice was observed in a Year 10 citizenship lesson where students worked in teams to 'lower a helium stick'. This involved students working only with their index fingers to collectively lower a long cane to the floor. This activity was fun and engaging and very effectively exemplified the point that, where campaigning is concerned, working collaboratively can have real benefits.
- Similarly, in a Year 9 drama lesson, students were asked the question: 'What is prejudice?' Through simple but effective assessment they showed that they had little understanding of this concept. Through a well-planned, relevant and engaging lesson involving the X Factor clip of the audience's reaction to Susan Boyle before and after she sang, along with thought-provoking, open-ended questions from the teacher, all students were allowed to demonstrate that they had made at least good progress.
- Good practice was also seen in the delivery of politics in the sixth form where students quizzed each other about the government in the cybercafé. Moreover, Year 7 students enthusiastically danced 'Zumba' to raise money for the LEPROA charity to support people with leprosy.
- Where students make satisfactory progress, this is primarily because teaching is not sufficiently well planned to meet their individual needs or challenge their thinking. The teacher dominates the lesson and only allows very small amounts of time for students to work independently. This does not allow them to develop their thoughts, opinions and skills of enquiry. On these occasions, teaching is less inspiring, engaging and relevant.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the curriculum in citizenship is good.

- The curriculum is very well planned and organised. A wealth of well-designed resources is available for non-specialist teachers to use and access remotely to aid their planning.
- Clear mapping of the key processes and concepts is in place, and while this does not yet extend to the range of content, evidence shows effective delivery through subjects such as history, English and science, together with a weekly personal, social and health education and citizenship lesson. Less coverage is given to politics, particularly about

how parliament works and the civil and criminal justice system, outside of the sixth form.

- The curriculum is relevant, engaging and responsive. Some of the most inspiring and memorable aspects of the curriculum are those that take place outside the classroom. Students are rightly proud of annual events such as the sponsored walk, sack race, and conga, not only because they raise nearly £20,000 a year for charity but because they simultaneously include every one of the 1,400 students.
- The school has meaningful and well-rooted partnerships at home and across the globe from its adult education centre. Here, sixth formers teach members of the public to text on their mobiles to a Junior High School in Japan. The school has held successful exchanges with this school and most recently provided support as it was affected by the tsunami.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship is good.

- Citizenship has been given a strong profile within the school as a result of your and your senior leadership team's commitment and drive. The subject is well monitored and remains high in the school's priorities.
- While staff receive good support for teaching, there has been a lack of subject-specific development and missed opportunities to exploit the knowledge, skills and experience of some teachers.
- Senior and middle leaders have successfully created memorable and meaningful learning experiences and instilled core values of acceptance and understanding across the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement further in citizenship by:
 - using teachers' specialist skills and subject knowledge more strategically
 - enhancing the teaching of politics and the civil and criminal justice system to ensure that all students are well prepared for life in modern, democratic Britain
- sharing good and outstanding teaching practice to embed key processes by:
 - increasing opportunities for extended periods of engaging, experiential and independent learning
 - ensuring that planning consistently meets the needs of all students by providing sufficient challenge and support.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop citizenship in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection.

Yours sincerely

Sally Kenyon
Her Majesty's Inspector