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Mrs J Reilly
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Reilly

Ofsted 2010–11 subject survey inspection programme: personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 28 and 29 September 2010 to look at work in PSHE education.

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 eight lessons, one assembly and one tutor time.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a good understanding of how to lead a healthy life and keep themselves safe. They can explain the importance of a well-balanced diet.
- Students have a good knowledge about the need to exercise and have many opportunities to put this into practice. Sporting activities are well attended.
- Students have a secure knowledge of sex and relationships education and of the dangers associated with misuse of drugs, alcohol and tobacco on their bodies and on other people. They know about aspects of mental health, such as anxiety and eating disorders.

- Students have a good awareness of their career options but are less secure about aspects of finance. Although they have learnt about budgeting and simple economic concepts, learning is not consolidated as well as it could be and students lack confidence in their knowledge.
- Personal development is good. Students are friendly, polite and well behaved. They are confident, able to work independently and show respect for the views of others. They feel safe and secure and are able to develop skills of reflection. Many have positive attitudes to PSHE education and enjoy their learning.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are generally well planned with a wide variety of learning activities and clear learning outcomes.
- Positive relationships exist between teachers and students, leading to good behaviour and good attitudes to learning. Teachers show a high level of care and support for students. Excellent ground rules are established in lessons when dealing with sensitive issues.
- The quality of the lessons varies considerably when the subject is taught by non-specialists. In some lessons, the pace of work is too slow and the work is too easy.
- A good range of high-quality resources which include role-play, DVD materials and discussion-based scenarios are used effectively to engage students' interest.
- In some lessons, questions are not sufficiently challenging to probe students' understanding and thinking and these lessons are too teacher directed.
- Assessment opportunities are clearly built into lesson plans but it is not evident how they are used to judge progress against the end of key stage statements. Reports to parents on PSHE education are informative.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the PSHE education curriculum is good.

- The PSHE curriculum is broad and permeates many aspects of the school's work from discrete teaching to cross-curriculum coverage. Students are provided with useful opportunities for community action in Year 10.
- Good support for vulnerable students is provided through the inclusion centre and by accredited courses, such as Work Skills.
- External agencies, such as Connexions, are successful in supporting and preparing students for the next stage in their lives.
- The sixth form PSHE programme is broad, with many opportunities for students to develop leadership skills and act as role-models for younger students.

- The wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities gives students good opportunities to develop, apply and practise their personal and social skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- PSHE education is given high priority by senior leaders.
- The subject leadership has developed many aspects of the provision and has ensured that the curriculum is up-to-date and responsive.
- Although improvement plans clearly identify the priorities, they are not sharply focused on improving teaching and learning.
- The focus on the inclusion of all students is strong.
- The leadership and management of PSHE provision in the sixth form are good. A varied and interesting programme has been established which meets students' needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- supporting teachers in improving the pace of lessons and developing questioning techniques
- monitoring more formally, students' progress against the end of key stage statements.

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

As I 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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector