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Mr M Cramer
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Cramer

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 4 and 5 October 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 five lessons and one form time.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students are confident, welcoming and caring. They are very reflective and readily express their views. They listen to the opinions of others carefully. When given the opportunity they are able to work independently and creatively.
- Students' emotional development is good and they are able to discuss feelings openly. They understand how to recognise and deal with stress in themselves and in others.
- Students have a good understanding of how to stay healthy and most have an accurate understanding of a balanced diet and the need for exercise. However, some students do not always put their knowledge into practice.

- Students have a good understanding of the effects and dangers of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco, and they can discuss the impact of drug use on family members. They know how to stay safe, both in school and outside. However, their skills such as resisting peer-group pressure, assessing and managing risks, and making decisions are less well practised.
- Students are making secure progress in learning how to manage their money and they have developed their enterprise skills very well. Throughout the school, students are prepared well for the next stage of their education and their future adult life.
- Students' awareness of sex and relationships education is good and they have developed mature and responsible attitudes to the subject.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is satisfactory.

- Relationships between teachers and students are positive and purposeful, so students are secure and cooperative. The care, guidance and support for students are very good and contribute significantly to students' achievement.
- Teachers are organised and they manage their students' behaviour well. They use information and communication technology (ICT) and other resources well so that the work is more interesting. For example, in a Year 7 lesson on investment, the teacher used ICT to highlight important words and ideas.
- However, in some lessons, the purpose of the lesson was not sufficiently clear because the teacher's subject knowledge was not secure. At times, there was too little challenge for some students, especially those who were more able and this led to some students becoming inattentive.
- Occasionally, teachers did not use the end of the lesson well to summarise and consolidate students' learning as they had not managed the lesson time properly or were not clear about the purpose of the lesson.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development, and does not show how well students are progressing.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE curriculum is good.

- The use of the 'thinking skills' programme to provide most PSHE education has made the subject interesting, engaging. As a result, students are very enthusiastic and motivated by the subject. However, it has fragmented some aspects of the subject, for example, drugs education.
- The planning for students in years 10 and 11 is secure, but is not as stimulating as that provided for younger students.
- The sixth form benefit from a broad and interesting programme that meets their needs well.

- The curriculum is enriched well by a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs and activities that are supported very well. A wide range of visitors and outside agencies are used well, such as the police on Crime Day, who make a good contribution to develop students' understanding.
- Enterprise and careers education make a very good contribution to students' economic well-being and their future opportunities in later life.
- A satisfactory programme to develop students' financial capability is beginning to help them learn about managing their personal finances.
- The good programme of sex and relationships, has been successfully planned in response to students' views. There has been less consultation with students or parents to help make PSHE education, as a whole, more relevant to students' needs.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are satisfactory.

- There is an informed vision for the subject and a good understanding of how to make the teaching of PSHE education more effective. However, monitoring does not yet give an overall picture of the quality of provision and planning is unclear about the steps needed for improvement.
- Regular training for some staff has not been sufficiently shared with all teachers, so some are lacking in subject knowledge.
- The introduction of the thinking skills programme and the sex and relationships programme have successfully improved students' achievement and attitudes to the subject.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving teaching through the development of teachers' subject knowledge and the improvement of lesson planning and assessment
- developing leadership and management by clarifying roles and responsibilities to improve the planning of the curriculum and monitoring of provision.

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

Susan Orpin
Additional Inspector