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Mr M Braidley  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Braidley

**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 our visit on 16 and 17 November 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; observation of nine lessons and a visit to the curriculum support area and Parliament Day.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

**Achievement in PSHE education**

Achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Pupils have an excellent knowledge of how to stay healthy. They know what is meant by a balanced diet and apply their knowledge in the choices that they make in the dining room where 80% of them take the nutritious meal provided by the school.
- Pupils understand the need to exercise for physical and mental health and they are provided with many opportunities to put this into practice. Participation rates in sporting activities are high.
- Pupils have excellent knowledge and understanding of the physical dangers and social effects of substance misuse including alcohol and

tobacco. They are able to discuss sex and relationship education and sexual health risks in a mature and sensitive manner.

- Pupils are able to identify and discuss the importance of a variety of social and personal relationships and how these impact on their lives. They understand the full range of types of bullying have practised resisting peer-group pressure using drama techniques.
- The pupils spoken to all felt safe in school and knew where to get help with personal problems. Pupils with special educational needs and/or disabilities are very well included and make similar progress to other pupils because they are given extra support.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of basic economic concepts. They have excellent opportunities to put their skills into practice in industry and enterprise days, and in work shadow in Year 8 and work experience in Year 11. They have outstanding careers education, know their Connexions adviser and feel that they are well prepared for the next stage of their education.
- Personal development is outstanding. By the time students leave the school, they have developed excellent social skills, emotional maturity and self-confidence. They are able to articulate their own feelings and opinions clearly, preparing them well for the future.

### **Quality of teaching of PSHE education**

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are characterised by very good relationships and a safe, caring atmosphere. Teachers have very good rapport with pupils and, as a result, pupils are ready to discuss and share their feelings. High levels of care and support contribute to the achievement of individual pupils.
- Lessons are well planned and prepared, with clear learning objectives which are shared with pupils.
- In good lessons, resources, including information and communication technology, are adapted and used well to meet the needs of the pupils. However, in less successful lessons, taught by non-specialists, a relatively narrow range of techniques is used to engage and involve pupils in their learning.
- Some evaluation of how well topics have gone takes place, for example, in work experience. However, no formal systems exist to monitor and assess pupils' learning in PSHE education.

### **Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education**

The quality of the PSHE education curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is developmental and sufficient time is allocated so that aspects can be covered in depth and re-visited across the age ranges. Cross-curricular links are used effectively to deepen and reinforce knowledge and understanding.

- The provision to meet the needs of different groups of pupils is outstanding. Support with communication, personal and social skills is provided effectively in the Curriculum Support Area. The Drop-in Centre is highly effective in giving additional support to pupils who need it and a Lifestyles Club provides extra support for targeted pupils.
- The wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities gives students outstanding opportunities to apply and practise their personal and social skills.
- The achievement of re-accreditation in the Healthy Schools award has had a positive impact on a range of health-related issues, such as the re-launch of the Drop-in Centre.
- Specialist status in science makes a good contribution to the PSHE curriculum through work on healthy lifestyles, including alcohol use, and challenging gender stereotypes through the Women into Engineering project.
- Outstanding use is made of a wide range of external partnerships and visitors to the school to enliven PSHE education and provide expertise.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education**

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- There is a strong vision for PSHE education and the senior leadership team demonstrates its commitment by teaching the subject in Key stage 4.
- Senior leaders monitor the teaching of PSHE education and the head of department has conducted an extensive audit. This has given the school an accurate picture of provision. The action plan in place reflects the need to review current assessment practice.
- Staff are well supported by the recently appointed coordinator who is working hard to thoroughly review schemes of work and resources and make these available on a virtual learning network.
- At the moment no-one has the PSHE certificate, although previous post-holders did, and some non-specialist staff lack training in the methodology of teaching PSHE education.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- developing the training and skills of non-specialist staff who teach PSHE education
- systematically building in assessment tasks to the programmes of study and assessing against the outcome statements at the end of each Key Stage.

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

**Margaret Jones**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**