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Mr R Pritchard  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Pritchard

**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 25 and 26 January 2011 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 four lessons and a lower-school assembly.

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 live healthy and safe lives. They know what makes a healthy diet and understand the importance of vitamins, minerals and fibre.
- Students understand the importance of exercise in maintaining physical and mental health and they participate enthusiastically in the range of activities provided for them at lunchtimes and after school, despite the transport difficulties involved.
- They know the rules of road safety and how to look after themselves when they are out without an adult.

- Older students have a good understanding of sex and relationships education and learn about relationships and the benefits of family life in religious education lessons.
- Most students understand the dangers of drugs, alcohol and tobacco, but for some the relative danger of these substances is not clear enough.
- All students, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in these areas. The few students from minority ethnic backgrounds are included well and make good progress.
- Throughout the school, students are prepared well for the next stage of their education and their future adult life. They know their careers adviser and feel that they receive good careers education and impartial careers advice. Their understanding of economic concepts and financial management is less well developed.
- Students have positive attitudes to PSHE education. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding and students are keen to participate and are articulate when expressing their views. They show respect for each other and their teachers. The caring environment provided results in students feeling safe and secure and being able to develop skills of reflection.

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

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- PSHE lessons are taught by tutors and relationships are excellent because tutors know their students so well. The care, guidance and support for students are very good and contribute significantly to their achievement.
- The level of knowledge and expertise that tutors possess in PSHE education is inconsistent because of a lack of recent training. This sometimes results in a rather didactic approach with too little student engagement. The methods used are too limited.
- In the best lessons, the pace of teaching is brisk and students are actively involved and challenged to explain their answers. In the less successful lessons, teachers talk too much and do not check that the students understand the work, both during and at the end of the lesson.
- Formal assessment and recording of students' progress are at an early stage of development, although reports are sent to parents.

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

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- PSHE education permeates the whole curriculum because of the school's Catholic mission. It is taught through discrete lessons, as strands in other subjects, in well-organised theme days, and a significant contribution is made by assemblies. However, the curriculum is fragmented because no specific schemes of work are in place, only an outline programme and there are too many 'one-off' lessons. Planning for lessons is detailed but is done by the coordinator and so tutors do not have ownership of what they

are teaching. The school recognises this challenge and the PSHE coordinator is planning to review provision.

- PSHE education is supported and underpinned by the achievement of the Healthy Schools award which has focused the school on increasing opportunities for exercise.
- Careers education and guidance are well-organised and links with the careers service are excellent with the result that virtually all students make a smooth transition to the next stage of their education or employment.
- The wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities gives students ample opportunities to apply and practise their personal and social skills. Students readily take on responsibilities such as being prefects and buddies to younger pupils.
- Outstanding use is made of external agencies to enhance and enliven provision. For example, the school nurse makes a valuable contribution to the teaching of sex and relationships education; guide dogs for the blind are used to illustrate points about disability and a range of speakers from the community talk about safety issues.

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

Leadership and management in PSHE education are good.

- The PSHE coordinator has an informed vision for the subject and a good understanding of how to make the teaching of PSHE education more effective. The coordinator knows the strengths and weaknesses well and has clear plans for improvement.
- The level of support from senior managers is good because the school recognises the importance of PSHE education for the development of the whole child and their future life.
- Evaluation of the programme takes place and demonstrates the shortcomings of the teaching methods and approach used by some tutors.
- Training is a weaker feature. No-one has the PSHE certificate and in recent years there has been a lack of specific training for tutors teaching PSHE education.

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

- improving teaching through the development of tutors' subject knowledge and their ownership of lesson planning
- ensuring that clear and coherent schemes of work are in place which include assessment tasks.

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**