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Mr D Harper
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Harper

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 7 October 2010 to look at work in PSHE.

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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons and two examples of circle time.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE is good with some outstanding features.

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Pupils are confident, thoughtful and considerate to each other. They work together very well, listen to each other carefully and value the contributions of others.
- Pupils have a good knowledge of different emotions and they are able to identify, discuss and manage their feelings well. They have learnt to recognise when others are feeling left out and know how to make sure everyone is included in work and play.
- Pupils are making good progress in learning how to stay safe. For example, they know how to lift and move physical education equipment. They know how to assess potentially risky situations, and they know what they should do when crossing the road.

- Pupils have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy and know what makes a balanced diet. They know the importance of eating five fruit and vegetables a day and the need to drink water regularly.
- Pupils know how important exercise is and enjoy physical education lessons. They play energetically and many take part in a wide range of after-school sporting activities.
- Older pupils have a very good knowledge about how the body changes at puberty and the importance and value of family relationships.
- Pupils have a basic understanding of the dangers of drugs, but are less clear about the physical effects. They have a limited knowledge of tobacco and alcohol.
- All pupils, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, make good progress in these areas. Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds, including those with English as an additional language, are included very well and make good progress.
- Pupils have a good understanding of the world of work. Older pupils know the skills needed for different types of employment and how to manage pocket money.

Quality of teaching of PSHE

The quality of teaching of PSHE is good.

- Teachers have purposeful relationships with pupils. They manage behaviour well so that lessons run smoothly.
- Lessons are planned carefully to provide a wide variety of activities. For example, teachers often use discussion in pairs or groups to help pupils think for themselves and develop their ideas. In one lesson, where pupils were learning how it feels to be left out, the teacher asked them to organise themselves in pairs. The teacher then used this experience to ask pupils whether they had been worried about being left without a partner, which helped them to understand the feeling more clearly.
- Teachers make good use of questions to help pupils develop and extend their understanding. However, occasionally opportunities for pupils to build on each other's ideas were missed, and pupils were expected to listen for too long.
- Teaching assistants make a good contribution to lessons by providing specific help to individuals and groups of pupils.
- Assessment is developing well, especially for the factual aspects of pupils' learning. Teachers make good use of informal assessment, for example, by asking pupils to indicate whether they have understood by putting their thumbs up. However, assessment is not always used to help pupils understand how to improve or to help teachers to plan lessons.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE

The PSHE curriculum is good.

- Pupils benefit from a very well-planned programme, which ensures they cover an interesting range of topics relevant to them.
- The programme for sex and relationships education is outstanding and has been developed through careful consultation with both pupils and parents. As a result, pupils feel they are getting the right amount of information at just the right time in their school career.
- The use of social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) materials is incorporated effectively and has had a significant impact on improving pupils' emotional development.
- The programme for drug education is less well developed and although it helps pupils to be aware of some of the dangers, it is not providing them with an appropriately clear understanding of the dangers and effects of some drugs, such as tobacco and alcohol.
- The school has achieved Healthy Schools status. The impact can be seen in the way that almost all pupils bring healthy fruit snacks to school, the widespread availability of water during lessons and the increase in numbers of pupils walking to school.
- Very good use is made of a wide range of trips and visitors to make learning more relevant and enjoyable, and to provide experiences where pupils can put their learning into practice. Pupils benefit from good opportunities to take responsibility. For example, some are play leaders who are trained to help others at playtimes and lunchtimes, making sure no pupil is left out of games and activities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are outstanding.

- The subject is being developed enthusiastically by all staff, including the very well informed subject leader. PSHE is strongly supported by senior managers, and is a very high priority in the school.
- A clear vision for developing PSHE and an accurate understanding of the strengths and areas for improvement are reflected in school improvement planning and the training of staff.
- Highly rigorous and thorough monitoring and evaluation of the subject are used extremely well to inform future plans. Very good improvements have been made to the subject, including the very successful programme for sex and relationships education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- planning lessons to ensure that pupils learn about the dangers and physical effects of drugs at a level appropriate for their age.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE 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