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Mrs L Curtis
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Curtis

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 17 February 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; observation of five lessons and a discussion with the student council.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is outstanding.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Students make exceptional progress with their communication, personal and social skills as they move through the school. Sixth-form students are confident, self-assured and empowered to discuss sensitive issues and thrive on the challenge to become successful and independent individuals.
- Students are very well- prepared for their next stage of education through the well-planned careers education and work-experience programmes. This is a stronger feature for older learners. Students benefit from a range of programmes to support their achievement and progression to post-16 education and training.

- Students across the school know how to keep themselves healthy, clean and safe. They know the five fruit and vegetable a day message, and that smoking and alcohol are bad for you.
- The students spoken with all said that they felt safe in school and they had a range of adults they would approach if they needed help.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Positive relationships enable engagement and enjoyment in PSHE lessons. Students are focused and interested in the subject matter. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding because teachers and teaching assistants are so skilled at meeting the different needs of individual students.
- Teachers prepare thoroughly for PSHE lessons and plan learning objectives for each individual student. A wide range of high-quality resources is used very effectively to stimulate and support learning, such as the well-equipped sensory room.
- Very occasionally, tasks go on for too long for the concentration span of students, or teachers' subject knowledge is slightly out of date.
- Assessment and recording are carried out meticulously by all staff so that a really accurate picture is built up of the progress of each student. This is used successfully to plan the next steps forward.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is outstanding.

- The whole-school curriculum is being reviewed. Nevertheless, PSHE education remains at the heart of the school's learning. It is allocated ample discrete lesson time as well as being embedded throughout the curriculum.
- PSHE education is supported and underpinned by the achievement of the Healthy Schools award which has focused the school on improving healthy eating and increasing exercise.
- The impact of specialist status for cognition and sensory learning on PSHE education is outstanding because it has enabled staff to explore new ways of helping students to experience independence and develop their social skills.
- The wide range of enrichment and extra-curricular activities, including the work of the student council, after-school clubs and the ski-ing trip to Italy, gives students outstanding opportunities to apply and practise their communication, personal and social skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

Leadership and management in PSHE education are outstanding.

- The support from the senior management team for PSHE education is inspirational and has successfully engaged all staff to meet the complex needs of the students and their families.
- The two PSHE coordinators have been appointed relatively recently and as yet do not carry out any lesson observations and have not had any subject-specific training.
- Self-evaluation is highly accurate and planning is informed by regular monitoring and feedback from students and parents.
- The engagement and partnership with parents and external agencies are exemplary in raising students' aspirations and helping them to plan for the future.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the role of the PSHE coordinators.

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