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Mrs C Woodend
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Woodend

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 24 and 25 March 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 six lessons and a science week activity; and a visit to the 14 to 19 restaurant.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is outstanding.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Students are confident and self-assured. Around the school they demonstrate independence and are able to undertake demanding responsibilities, for example, serving customers from the local community in the restaurant. When given the opportunity, they demonstrate extremely high levels of initiative and creativity, investigating problems with vigour. Students are very mature, thoughtful and reflective, articulating their ideas and handling difficult issues in a highly sensitive way.

- Students have a very good understanding of mental health problems, knowing how to recognise the symptoms in themselves and in others. They value others as individuals and respect their views.
- Students have very good understanding of how to stay healthy and safe. They make healthy food choices and understand the importance of regular exercise, making full use of the very wide range of sporting activities in lessons, at lunchtime and after school.
- Students have a very good understanding of how to stay safe, both in school and outside. They know the effects and dangers of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. They also know how to use the internet safely.
- Students' awareness of sex and relationships education is outstanding and they have very mature and responsible attitudes.
- Students make outstanding progress in learning how to manage their money and developing their understanding of their career options. They understand the demands and challenges of the workplace, and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future adult life.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Relationships between teachers and students are trusting, positive and cooperative. Care, guidance and support for students are outstanding and contribute significantly to their achievement.
- Lessons are well planned and teachers use a good variety of resources. Teachers are confident in leading discussions in sensitive or controversial areas and they encourage students to contribute their views.
- Teachers have a clear understanding of the value of PSHE education and they communicate its importance to students. They are enthusiastic and make many creative links with other subjects.
- While students have some good opportunities to take an active part in lessons, occasionally they are not given enough opportunity to think for themselves.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development and does not yet show students how well they are doing.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE education curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is creatively planned using the expertise of a wide range of staff and it is regularly reviewed, taking account of students' opinions. Local data are used very well to make sure that students' needs are met.
- The curriculum is enriched by an exceptionally wide range of extra activities, including PSHE education days, and lunchtime and after-school clubs, that is supported very well. A wide range of visitors and outside

agencies is used very effectively to support areas such as sexual health and careers education.

- Strong programmes support students' economic well-being, notably comprehensive schemes of work in areas such as financial capability and careers education.
- Sixth form students benefit from a broad and varied programme that meets their needs extremely well. For example, they learn how to cook healthy meals for themselves, how to manage their money and they have very good opportunities to develop their leadership and communication skills by helping classes during form lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are outstanding.

- An extremely strong vision for PSHE education is shared by all staff and it has a high priority. This has informed the development of the subject and is reflected in plans for the future.
- Staff are very enthusiastic and work together to plan the subject, making sure that it is interesting and relevant.
- All students are included extremely well, for example those from the autism unit. These students benefit from the excellent life skills programme which enables them to take a full part in main school life.
- The range of training for staff is broad and the school makes very good use of resources and partnerships with other agencies.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more assessment tasks to help show how well students are progressing.

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