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Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Bolton

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 28 and 29 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; and observation of five lessons, an assembly, two tutorial sessions and a presentation by the Fire and Rescue Service.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students are self-assured, friendly and thoughtful. They are very sociable, caring and they work together very well. Relationships between students are very good. When discussing important issues, they are sensitive and reflective.
- Students are able to discuss feelings openly. They understand how to recognise and deal with stress in themselves and in others well. They value others as individuals and respect their views.
- When given the opportunity, students are able to work independently, thinking for themselves and demonstrating high levels of initiative.

- Students have a good understanding of how to stay healthy. They know the importance of a balanced diet and appreciate the need for exercise. They make full use of the varied opportunities for sporting activities at lunchtime and after school.
- Students have a good understanding of the effects and dangers of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. They know how to stay safe, for example as a passenger in a car. Students have a very good knowledge of how to use the internet safely.
- Most students are making good progress in learning how to manage their money and they have developed their business and enterprise skills well. Throughout the school, students are well prepared for the next stage of their education and their future adult life.
- Students' awareness of sex and relationships education is good and they have developed mature, responsible and sensitive attitudes.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Relationships between teachers and students are positive and purposeful. The care, guidance and support for students are outstanding and contribute significantly to their achievement.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and generally well informed about the topics they are teaching and they make creative links with other subjects.
- Teachers use a wide variety of resources, including information and communication technology, to make lessons more interesting. For example, in a sex and relationships lesson, the teacher used case studies to help students consider different relationships.
- Although students have some very good opportunities to take an active part in lessons, sometimes teachers do not give enough opportunity for small group discussion, so students miss opportunities to think for themselves.
- Teachers have made a secure start to the assessment of some aspects of PSHE education, but it does not show students sufficiently clearly how to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- The curriculum is broad and has good links with other subjects. Discrete PSHE education lessons are planned well, so they build on topics from previous lessons. A varied programme of focus days has been carefully planned to take account of students' views. While these days are highly enjoyable, they do not always provide enough progression in the development of students' skills.

- The programme to develop students' financial capability and careers education makes a good contribution to students' economic well-being and their future opportunities in later life.
- The curriculum is enriched by a wide range of lunchtime and after-school clubs. A wide range of visitors and outside agencies is used effectively in such areas as road safety and health.
- The sixth-form students benefit from a broad and varied programme that meets their needs extremely well. For example, lessons to help them apply to higher education and training to develop their mentoring skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

Leadership and management in PSHE education are good.

- The clear vision and enthusiasm for the subject together with careful planning is helping it to develop well. PSHE education has a high priority in the curriculum and all students are included well.
- The subject has been monitored and evaluated well so there is an accurate understanding of the strengths and few areas for development.
- Staff are positive about innovation and have worked hard to make sure that the programme meets students' needs. Although well informed, some staff need further training on strategies to involve students more in lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more assessment tasks to help show how well students are progressing
- providing training for teachers on how to extend the range of teaching strategies that they use.

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