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4 April 2011

Mr P Salter
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Salter

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 with John Peckham HMI on 23 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 two groups of students and staff responsible for delivery and management of aspects of the PSHE curriculum; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of six lessons, an assembly, and the lunchtime arrangements.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students are polite and confident to talk to visitors. They have good personal and social skills and interact well in groups in lessons and around the school in social spaces.
- Achievement in PSHE education in the sixth form is good. Students are confident to express their views and debate topical issues. They have a less secure understanding of financial issues such as debt and interest rates.
- Students know what constitutes a healthy lifestyle although some choose not to eat healthily.

- Achievement in drugs education is good.
- Students have less depth of knowledge of sex and relationships education. Some students say that they would like to know more.
- Good support is provided for students whose circumstances have made them vulnerable to develop their personal and social skills through a range of intervention strategies, such as learning how to keep friends or manage their emotions when they get cross.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- While good overall, the teaching of PSHE is of variable quality. In the better lessons, assessment is used well to ensure that students make good progress. Plenary sessions are used well to review learning gains. Purposeful questioning challenges individuals. A good range of teaching strategies is used.
- In the less successful lessons, learning objectives are not clear enough and the teacher directs activities without checking for understanding.
- Constructive debate is used well by teachers in lessons to consolidate learning and deepen understanding.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- An extensive whole-school programme of PSHE is in place. However, insufficient time is allocated to sex and relationships and careers education in the main school and financial issues in the sixth form.
- External speakers are used well to enrich the PSHE curriculum.
- An extensive range of opportunities outside the curriculum enables students to develop their personal and social skills, such as board games at lunchtimes, sports teams and educational visits.
- The curriculum in Key Stage 4 does not provide sufficient opportunities for students to learn how to resist peer pressure and make personal decisions.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

Leadership and management in PSHE education are satisfactory.

- PSHE teachers are well supported by the head of department through individual training and guidance.
- The PSHE action plan identifies the key areas for improvement although insufficient emphasis is placed on measurable success criteria.
- The head of department brokers external speakers and workshops well that have a measurable impact on students' learning.

- The PSHE scheme of work is not regularly audited to take account of students' changing needs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the scheme of work provides more time:
 - in Key Stage 4 for students to develop their personal response to key sex and relationships decisions
 - in the sixth form for students to develop their financial awareness
 - across the school to further raise the profile of careers education.

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

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector