

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs L Hughes
Headteacher
William Howard School
Longtown Road
Brampton
Cumbria
CA8 1AR

Dear Mrs Hughes

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 1 and 2 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 and an assembly.

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

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students make exceptional progress with their personal and social skills as they move through the school. Sixth-form students are confident, self-assured and empowered to discuss sensitive issues. They readily take on responsibility for supporting younger students and act as excellent role models.
- Students have sound knowledge and understanding of the different food groups that contribute to a balanced and healthy diet, and why some foods should be restricted. Students know the benefits of exercise for physical and mental health. A high proportion take part in the range of

physical activities provided for them including the Duke of Edinburgh's Award scheme.

- All the students spoken to said that they feel safe in school and they all have an adult they would go to for help and advice. They know about the different forms of bullying including cyber and racist bullying. Older students are well aware of the dangers of homophobic bullying.
- Students have good knowledge and understanding about the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse and a successful anti-smoking group has been set up. Students have a good understanding of how relationships change as they get older and they know about sexual health risks.
- Younger students have a good understanding of managing pocket money and the functions of banks, and older students go on to study economic concepts such as profit, taxation, insurance, debit and credit.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- All the lessons seen were characterised by high expectations, good planning and preparation, excellent relationships and good discipline.
- Teachers generally have good subject knowledge. This is markedly better for the specialist team higher up the school rather than for tutors in Year 7 where not all had up-to-date knowledge.
- A range of resources, including information and communication technology, is used effectively to engage and involve students in their learning.
- Assessment tasks are built into schemes of work and this includes some peer- and self-assessment. However, this is not consistently recorded so students are not clear how much progress they are making.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is outstanding.

- PSHE education is embedded throughout the school. The culture of respect lies at the heart of the school's ethos and vision and is palpable in social spaces, wall displays and within students' relationships.
- The scheme of work is thorough and well-mapped across the school to ensure that key elements, such as sex and relationships, and drugs and alcohol education are regularly revisited at appropriate times.
- A wide range of enriching opportunities is provided within and beyond the formal PSHE curriculum. These include international links, especially with Tanzania, sporting activities and sports leadership and residential visits.
- The school's specialist status in science and mathematics has had a positive impact in developing links with the local business community.
- Students are well prepared for their next stage of education through the very well-planned careers education and work-experience programmes.

This is a stronger feature for older learners. Students who are at risk benefit from alternative programmes to support their achievement and progression to post-16 education, training or employment.

- Students in the sixth form have a programme of speakers as part of the general studies course and a good range of optional activities but no formal PSHE lesson.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

Leadership and management in PSHE education are outstanding.

- Subject leadership is strong; a high priority is placed on training for the specialist team. The Curriculum Leader for PD has the PSHE certificate and has used other training programmes to develop the PSHE curriculum.
- Self-evaluation is exemplary. It is detailed and accurate and action-planning is informed by regular lesson observation, monitoring and feedback from students and parents.
- PSHE education has a high profile in the school and is promoted effectively by the senior leaders and subject specialists. Staff are very clear that the personal well-being of students is crucial if they are to thrive and make the most of their opportunities in school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- recording students' progress more formally
- improving provision for PSHE lessons in the sixth form.

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