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Mrs P Kilbey
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Kilbey

Ofsted 2011–12 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 7 June 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 with responsibility for aspects of PSHE education, students and parents; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven lessons.

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

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students develop good personal and social skills as they move through the school, especially through the extensive range of leadership opportunities available. By the time students reach the sixth form, they have developed into confident, articulate and caring individuals.
- They have a good knowledge of sex and relationships education, drugs and financial issues and are confident to talk about them.
- Students know how to resist peer pressure and are able to make the right choice when faced with a challenging dilemma.

- Those students whose circumstances make them vulnerable achieve well through their determination to succeed.
- Students develop empathy through their charity work, consideration of others through work for and with the community, and tolerance and respect for cultural differences represented within the school.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- There is a range of teaching quality in PSHE lessons. Outstanding lessons are clear in their learning objectives and students are fully engaged and enjoy the lessons.
- Less successful lessons are more focused on a series of teacher-led activities rather than purposeful learning opportunities. Learning objectives in these lessons are not as sharp or measurable and as a consequence, opportunities for learning are missed.
- Good probing and challenging questioning is used in the best lessons to develop understanding and enhance students' confidence. In all PSHE lessons, students are encouraged to give full, rather than one word, answers.
- All teachers plan thoroughly for PSHE lessons and use a wide range of resources that stimulates students, such as DVD drama dilemmas and the use of digital video cameras.
- PSHE books are regularly marked and progress is reported to parents.
- Excellent support is provided for individuals who experience a range of pastoral difficulties.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- PSHE permeates the whole school curriculum and has a strong influence on the school's individual identity.
- The curriculum is well mapped throughout the school and sixth form and includes a wide range of opportunities for students to support local and global charities, organise community events and respond to community needs.
- Careers education and work experience play a major part in the curriculum. They successfully motivate and encourage students to aspire to succeed.
- There is a strong focus in the PSHE curriculum on restorative practices where students are encouraged to understand the implication of their actions for others and make amends where necessary.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education is good.

- The status of PSHE has been raised considerably over the last few years due to the purposeful leadership of the head of department and the support provided by the senior leadership team.
- Clear schemes of work are in place and a wide range of resources has been developed to stimulate and engage students in lessons.
- The head of department brokers good support from a wide range of external professionals and theatre companies that is valued by students for the in-depth knowledge and exciting presentations provided.
- Good training opportunities are provided by PSHE staff for colleagues in other schools.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all PSHE lessons have clear and measurable learning objectives for all activities.

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