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Dear Mr Brown

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 17 and 18 October 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 10 lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a good understanding of what is meant by a balanced diet. They understand why fruit and vegetables are important and the role of fibre in the diet. Many students put their knowledge into practice in what they choose to eat at breaks and lunchtimes. Students know why exercise is important for physical health and how it helps in controlling stress. Most spoken to participate enthusiastically in the wide range of sporting and dance opportunities provided by the school.
- Students are positive about being able to keep themselves safe and feeling safe in school. They are taught road safety and first aid and recognise the dangers of smoking and alcohol and the physical and social damage the misuse of drugs may cause.

- Awareness of the physical aspects of sex and relationships education is good. However, not all of the students spoken to have had an opportunity to explore the nature of relationships in any depth.
- Students know about different forms of mental illness. They know how to deal with stress and have practised resisting peer-group pressure. They know about the different sorts of bullying including cyber, racist and homophobic bullying.
- There is a well-planned enterprise and finance programme for all students so that all have a good grasp of basic economic concepts and business vocabulary. Students have many opportunities to develop an understanding of the world of work and, as a result, many students have thought carefully about their futures and are well aware of different career pathways.
- Students are polite, positive, friendly and keen to express their views. They are articulate and reflect maturely on what they know. They feel their views are listened to through the school council. They take on a range of responsibilities across the school and the wider community. However, there is too much litter left by students after breaks and lunchtimes.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are characterised by productive relationships and good discipline. They are generally well-planned with clear objectives. However, some variability exists across tutor groups in the depth of coverage given to different topics.
- Teachers match the work carefully to students' abilities. Lessons are well resourced and outstanding use is made of expert external speakers and trainers.
- Questioning techniques are a weaker aspect. Most teachers tended to only ask students who volunteered and the rest were passive listeners.
- Progress is assessed well through accredited courses. However, the end of key stage attainment statements are not used by tutors for PSHE education as a whole.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- Sufficient time is allocated through the Life Skills programme taught by tutors, regular enrichment theme days, assemblies and various options available from Year 10 onwards, such as employability skills, financial capability, cookery and basic trades. Students whose circumstances cause them to be vulnerable receive effective individual support. The needs of the sixth form are met by a very well-planned and compulsory programme of activities.

- A planned programme of careers and economic education ensures that students feel they are very well prepared for the next steps in their education.
- The use of social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) resources has had a positive impact, particularly on the attitudes of staff; they are aware of the emotional well-being of students and incorporate skills and PSHE education learning into their lessons.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- The new coordinators for personal and economic well-being are enthusiastic and committed. They have mapped provision well and support teaching staff effectively.
- Monitoring is carried out regularly in the form of pastoral reviews, which include interviews with students to canvass their opinions, and lesson observations.
- The development plans for these areas are detailed and thorough and include the strategies required to improve provision.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring consistency in teaching by building up the expertise of tutors
- pulling together the assessment of students' progress by use of the end of key stage statements.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE education in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones
Additional Inspector