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Mr M Taylor
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Dear Mr Taylor

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 November 2011 to look at work in PSHEE.

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; discussions with two groups of students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; an observation of circle time; and joint observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHEE is satisfactory.

Achievement in PSHEE

Achievement in PSHEE is satisfactory.

- Students' personal development is good. They form open and respectful relationships, are supportive of one another and demonstrate the ability to discuss their feelings and emotions openly. The personal, social and emotional needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are especially well supported.
- Students have a good knowledge of what constitutes a balanced diet and why it is important. They apply this knowledge increasingly in making their own food choices. Students know the benefits of exercise for physical and mental health and a high proportion take part in sporting activities.

- Students understand the risks associated with drugs, alcohol and smoking. However, opportunities to explore peer pressure in depth are dependent on students' subject choices. This is particularly effective in drama.
- Students have a satisfactory knowledge and understanding of sex and relationships education. They complement coverage in school with discussion with their peers and access to information on the internet. Delivery is not monitored sufficiently to ensure consistency across classes.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying and the effects on mental health. They recognise the importance of eradicating the use of homophobic language as part of the school's approach to promoting an inclusive and safe environment. A high priority is placed on internet safety.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of financial capability and enterprise skills are less well developed. The introduction of an online rewards system is helping students to make decisions about aspects of personal finance.

Quality of teaching in PSHEE

The quality of teaching in PSHEE is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationships with students and create a safe and supportive environment to allow students to debate social and political issues in small groups or whole-class discussion. However, the quality of planning and delivery is inconsistent across lessons. The sequencing of learning tasks does not always help students to deepen their knowledge and understanding. Key vocabulary is not routinely displayed to reinforce students' knowledge, or support accurate use in written work.
- A variety of methods is used in lessons to encourage active learning. However, some lessons are over-directed by the teacher allowing students insufficient opportunities to develop their own skills.
- Good cross-curricular teaching of PSHEE was observed in history. Students were challenged to identify examples of modern day slavery. By gathering and sharing information, the students had the opportunity to develop their skills, express empathy and develop a strong sense of social justice.
- Assessment is not used systematically to measure progress over time, or to evaluate the various strands of the PSHEE programme.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHEE

The quality of the curriculum in PSHEE is satisfactory with some good features.

- The PSHEE curriculum is fragmented. The development of schemes of work for the core component of the PSHEE curriculum is at an early stage.
- Careers education supports work-experience placements, student choices at 16 and an extremely low incidence of students who do not access training, employment or education. However, work to challenge gender

vocational stereotypes is limited and students have too little knowledge of the links between careers, finance and lifestyle choices.

- Cross-curricular input from history, geography, technology and physical education make a good contribution to aspects of PSHEE.
- The house system, circle time and approaches to restorative justice provide good opportunities for students to appreciate and respect diversity and to take responsibility. The wide range of enrichment, extra-curricular activities and leadership responsibilities provides excellent opportunities for students to develop, apply and practice their personal and social skills. The eco group have raised the profile of recycling through an innovative project to construct a greenhouse from plastic bottles.
- The Healthy Schools Award has had a positive impact on students' awareness of healthy eating and the promotion of exercise. The 'Let's Get Cooking' club is extremely popular with students, parents and carers.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHEE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHEE is satisfactory.

- The subject is highly valued in the school and its importance in promoting students' well-being and employability skills is clearly understood. Significant changes have taken place this academic year to improve coordination, planning and delivery.
- Although there are some strong features, provision lacks coherence; gaps are evident and the use of assessment to support progression across strands is underdeveloped.
- Leaders have identified development points and are keen to pilot an e-portfolio to record students' achievements in PSHEE, increase parent and carer engagement and strengthen planning.
- New leadership provides vision and drive for the development of PSHEE, drawing on successful initiatives, such as international links and good practice in planning and delivery.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all strands of PSHEE are rigorously planned to meet students' needs, particularly careers education and financial capability
- implementing a system of teacher assessment for all strands of the programme to ensure coherence and progression across the school
- strengthening the monitoring of PSHEE so that inconsistencies are identified and acted upon.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHEE 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

Nada Trikić
Her Majesty's Inspector