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Mr R Munson
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Munson

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 8 and 9 November 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 six lessons and a Year 7 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 lunchtimes. Students know why exercise is important for physical health. Most participate enthusiastically in the wide range of sporting opportunities provided by the school.
- Students are positive about being able to keep themselves safe and feeling safe in school. They are taught road and water safety and know about different types of bullying and how to protect themselves.

- They recognise the dangers of smoking and drug misuse but their awareness of the physical and social damage the misuse of alcohol may cause is more limited.
- Awareness of the physical aspects of sex and relationships education is good. Students understand the changes that occur at puberty and older students understand sexual health risks and the role of contraception.
- Students have limited opportunities to explore managing money and economic concepts although older students understand basic economic concepts such as debt, credit and interest.
- Students benefit from a well-planned careers education and guidance programme. This continues into the sixth form and results in the vast majority of students going on to higher or further education or employment.
- Personal development is good. Students are confident and express their views clearly. They enjoy their lessons and participate well when given the opportunity. They appreciate their new school building and take pride in keeping it smart. They willingly take on responsibilities around the school; acting as school leaders in a range of areas and mentors for the younger students.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are characterised by productive relationships and good discipline, resulting in good behaviour. They are well-planned with clear objectives which are shared well with students. However, because of time pressure, sometimes too much is attempted in a single lesson.
- Teachers are knowledgeable and confident to deal with sensitive issues. Outstanding use is made of external speakers, such as theatre groups and the Travellers advice service, to make lessons more interesting and relevant.
- Questioning techniques are a weaker aspect. Teachers tended to ask students who volunteered and the rest were passive listeners.
- Progress is assessed well using a system devised by the department and assessment tasks built into schemes of work. As a result, students have a good picture of the progress they are making.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- Work is very well-planned according to detailed schemes of work and the focus is kept on raising self-esteem and self-confidence. However, the time allocated for discrete lessons is limited and not enough use is made of topics which could be covered in other subjects to maximise the use of time.

- The exciting range of extra-curricular activities provided, including regular career talks, international links, sports, expeditions abroad, mentoring schemes and a school newspaper, enhances the provision for PSHE education and enables students to apply and practise their PSHE skills.
- Students whose circumstances cause them to be vulnerable receive very effective individual support from the ACE centre. The needs of the sixth form are met by a well-planned programme of weekly conferences.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- The department is run most efficiently and the head of department acts as a good role model for staff and students.
- An assistant headteacher has taken on responsibility for information, advice and guidance (IAG) and has effectively coordinated enterprise education, careers and work-related learning.
- Monitoring is carried out regularly in the form of annual subject reviews, which include lesson observations and accurate self-evaluation. The resulting development plans are detailed and thorough and include the strategies required to improve effectiveness.
- Good support from the senior leadership team has ensured that PSHE education has the same status as other subjects in the school and this is reflected in the high expectations of teachers and the response from students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- auditing and mapping the work done in other subjects to maximise the use of time in personal development lessons
- extending the study of economic well-being and financial capability, particularly for younger students.

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