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Mr K McCourt
Headteacher
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Dear Mr McCourt

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 22 November 2011 to look at work in PSHE.

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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; and observation of nine lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE is good.

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Pupils of all ages are aware of the importance of emotional and mental health and well-being. They learn how to manage worries and feelings and know how to ask for help. Positive relationships, respect for others and friendships are evident around the school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of healthy eating and the benefits of physical exercise and can link this to their learning in science. They are aware of the risks associated with some drugs and medicines and the dangers of smoking and alcohol. Older pupils clearly enjoy their physical education 'bursts' where they sing and dance enthusiastically. Extra-curricular sport has a good take up and is popular with all ages.

- Older pupils in particular are confident and mature and are aware of puberty and body changes, although they would like more information. They take responsibility for themselves and others, for example, as playground buddies.
- Pupils understand risk and what makes a situation unsafe. They feel confident that they can talk to adults and that they can and should help others. They are well informed about some of the different forms bullying can take, although have less knowledge of racist and homophobic bullying.

Quality of teaching in PSHE

The quality of teaching in PSHE is good.

- Lessons include varied activities and strategies, such as circle time and an imaginative use of resources to make learning fun and interesting. Teachers make good use of questions to assess the progress pupils are making and pupils are encouraged to talk about their learning.
- Teaching about some sensitive issues such as puberty and changes affecting both girls and boys, illegal drugs, racism and homophobia, are light touch. Teachers would benefit from subject-specific training to increase their knowledge and understanding.
- Some teachers plan work that is not always well matched to varied abilities, especially the more able. Pupils complete the same task despite their different starting points.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE is good.

- The quality of the curriculum is broad and reflects the Catholic ethos of the school. It follows the 'Here I Am' religious education syllabus and is closely linked to the social and emotional aspects of learning programme.
- The curriculum is flexible and involves discrete lessons, assemblies, cross-curricular themes and special events, for example, anti-bullying week when the timetable is suspended. Clear cross-curricular links with science enable older pupils to learn why the body needs nutrients to help muscles work.
- The school holds the Healthy Schools award which supports and encourages children to be active and healthy. There is enthusiastic take up of sports and dance as well as a breakfast club and gardening club which sells its produce to pupils and staff.
- Pupils look forward to their trips out of school, especially their residential visits and value the visits from the police, fire service and work-related contacts as part of their careers guidance.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE is good.

- PSHE has a high status and is central to the vision of the school. Pupils' behaviour is very good and there is a feeling of warmth, happiness and enjoyment throughout the school.
- Provision has been mapped well and the approach to policy development and practice is very systematic and organised. Statutory requirements are met as is most non-statutory guidance. However, the PSHE action plan would benefit from more detail.
- Staff are committed and enthusiastic, although some may benefit from additional subject-specific training.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing a programme of subject-specific training for teachers in the teaching of a range of sensitive issues
- ensuring that activities and tasks are well matched, especially for the more able.

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

Mary Lanovy-Taylor
Additional Inspector