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Mr M Jones
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Jones

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 9 February 2012 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 and two groups of students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is satisfactory.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a good knowledge and understanding of sex and relationships and drugs education and know how to apply this information to their lives and make informed judgements.
- They are well prepared for the transition to the next phase of education or training by developing good financial and enterprise skills.
- They have good opportunities to develop responsible attitudes and leadership skills through a range of activities. For example the Anti-Bullying Committee (ABC); the Student Union; the popular Duke of Edinburgh Award; and the chance to mentor younger students.

- Students display a mature attitude and can confidently articulate their learning and understanding of a range of sensitive issues.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- The overall quality of teaching is variable. The limited time allocated to the PSHE taught in tutor periods impacts on the quality of teaching and learning.
- When aspects of PSHE are taught through other subjects and during off-timetable days, the quality of teaching is better. Students have more opportunities to discuss issues, share ideas, and take part in practical activities.
- In the less successful lessons, the learning intentions are not clear and all students, particularly the more able, are not sufficiently challenged by questioning or provided with enough opportunities to discuss or share their views.
- The assessment of attainment and progress does not currently inform all teachers' planning.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- The curriculum is broad, coherent and supported by a range of subjects throughout the school, for example, religious education, science and drama.
- Students have good opportunities to develop PSHE skills through extra-curricular clubs and sports, off-timetable days, the use of visiting speakers and theatre companies.
- PSHE-themed assemblies provide a valuable contribution to the overall curriculum.
- However, dedicated curriculum time delivered in tutor periods is insufficient to be able to cover all topics in enough depth or facilitate quality discussion.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- The PSHE action plan does not contain sufficient measurable success criteria to be able to evaluate the impact of planned actions and is not effectively informed by the rigorous monitoring of teaching and learning.
- There has been insufficient subject-specific training for all staff to be able to demonstrate confidence and specialist expertise.
- A good range of external speakers is well-brokered to support learning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the consistency of teaching and learning of PSHE in tutor times
- ensuring that all staff receive appropriate training to enable them to deliver the PSHE curriculum effectively
- developing a more effective and robust system for monitoring the quality of teaching and learning and the monitoring of students' progress in PSHE.

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

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector