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Mrs S Mansfield
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Mansfield

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 22 and 23 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 and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of lessons, an assembly and tutorial period.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a good understanding of how to maintain health and well-being. Food technology and physical education lessons support their learning about nutrition and the importance of exercise in maintaining physical and mental health. All are aware of the dangers of substance misuse and older students have practised resisting peer-pressure.
- Students' understanding of the physical and emotional aspects of sex and relationships education (SRE) is strong. This is because the work is comprehensive and appropriate to age and ability; including bespoke lessons for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities. Learning is greatly enhanced by the contribution of sixth form students who are trained to deliver aspects of PSHE, including SRE.

- Students demonstrate a well-informed and empathetic view of mental health issues; they know where to go for extra support and advice and value highly the services of the school nurse and counsellors. They understand well the impact of different types of bullying including cyberbullying and homophobia and how to risk assess personal safety scenarios including e-safety.
- They develop their good communication and leadership skills through taking responsibility as, for example, year and school councillors; members of the student leadership group; peer mentors or Associate Governors.
- Students have a sharp understanding of the personal qualities and characteristics needed to secure and maintain employment and develop skills for independent living. In Key Stage 4, they gain in-depth knowledge through the Employability Qualification which includes modules on personal budgeting, taxation and business. On personal development days (PD days) students learn about the production and sale of goods and visit businesses and institutions of higher education.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and awareness of best practice. They benefit from subject-specific training on issues such as e-safety; drugs, alcohol and tobacco education and SRE. Teachers use a range of strategies including technology to stimulate interest and create a safe learning environment for students to express and explore their views and feelings. Students recalled many memorable and innovative lessons that have had a lasting impact on their attitudes and awareness of PSHE.
- Students' needs are considered well in the planning of schemes of work and individual lessons. For example, topics may be re-visited but content is not repeated and account is taken of students' growth and maturity. Those who require extra help with their learning are supported.
- Although there is no formal grading of students' work in PSHE education, it is marked and commented on and targets for improvement are set. Reports to parents and carers indicate that teachers know their students and can describe their progression and what they need to do to improve.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- The curriculum is delivered effectively through tutor-led lessons and PD days. It is supported by themed assemblies, tutorials and extra-curricular sessions targeted at those whose circumstances make them vulnerable; for example, sessions to boost self-esteem and parenting awareness. This amounts to an innovative and creative curriculum.
- Continuity and progress are built into the programme. This is particularly strong with regard to economic well-being where students study finance, enterprise and careers throughout their schooling. It is less strong in

aspects of personal well-being where the extent to which students experience learning in personal well-being depends in part upon their option choices at Key Stage 4.

- A wide range of extra-curricular activities and leadership responsibilities provide excellent opportunities for students to apply their personal and social skills. The cooking, fitness and debating clubs and the Duke of Edinburgh Award are such examples. Sixth form students benefit from regular guidance lessons covering issues such as sexual health, drug awareness, careers advice and independent living, supplemented by an extensive enrichment programme of life skills such as driving awareness.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- The subject has high status and is central to the vision and ethos of the school. The leadership model which involves managers representing learning support, curriculum and pastoral roles, is very effective. All are aware of the varied leadership roles and communications are very effective. Leaders and managers inspire confidence in teachers and students who, as a result of regular consultation, feel ownership of, and commitment to, the programme.
- Monitoring of the curriculum is strong but is less rigorous in the evaluation of teaching and learning. Improvement planning includes a range of achievable actions. However, action points do not address effectively the monitoring of teaching through more robust observation.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in PSHE education
- further developing the personal well-being element of the curriculum at Key Stage 4 to ensure that students have their full entitlement regardless of their option choices.

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

Janet Palmer
Her Majesty's Inspector