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Mr M Kelly
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kelly

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 12 and 13 March 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 six lessons, a Justice and Peace meeting and a whole-school assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is outstanding.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Across the key stages, students have an excellent understanding of the different aspects of PSHE education. For example, students in Year 7 understand clearly the changes that occur in puberty, and students in Year 12 are gaining in-depth knowledge about the range of options open to them after they leave school.
- As students progress at the school they are increasingly able to apply developing PSHE education skills, such as communication, self-

presentation, teamwork and reflection on the wide variety of enrichment activities.

- Students' ability to express their own views articulately and their confidence to ask questions and interrogate data, particularly for those in the sixth form, are outstanding. As a result, one student is now the Youth Parliament representative for Hertfordshire.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those whose circumstances may make them vulnerable receive a high standard of ongoing support from staff and from other students which enables them to make the same rapid progress as others.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Teachers and tutors have very high expectations for PSHE education and many regard the subject as the most important they teach. They act as excellent role models and lessons are characterised by warm relationships and good humour.
- Lessons are well-prepared with clear objectives which are shared in an accessible way with students. Tasks are carefully chosen to match the ability of different groups of students.
- External speakers are used very effectively and make an outstanding contribution to the programme. Teachers deal extremely well with sensitive issues and make very effective use a variety of techniques to ensure that students feel secure and able to express their honest opinions and reach their own judgements.
- Because teachers know the students so well they are continually assessing progress and some assessment activities are built into the lesson plans. However, this is not always recorded formally.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Ample time is allocated in PSHE education lessons to follow up issues raised in tutor periods, the enrichment week and assemblies. Students report that what they learn is continually reinforced and consolidated in other subject areas. The needs of the sixth form are met by an excellent, well-planned and compulsory programme of activities.
- An extensive programme of careers and economic education and impartial careers guidance ensures that students feel they are very well prepared for the next steps in their education.
- The high-quality enrichment activities make an outstanding contribution to the development of PSHE skills and are accessible to all. For example, at

the time of the inspection the school was presenting the musical 'Grease' and one sixth form student was able to describe in detail the skills and qualities she had learnt as a result of her involvement, and the students who visited Uganda in connection with the KISS charity described how they had benefited enormously from the experience.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- The school leadership team sees the inculcation of PSHE education values to be at the heart of their work and accord it the highest priority.
- Tutors who teach PSHE education are exceptionally well supported. They have access to a central bank of resources and guided lesson plans on the school network and are offered many opportunities to receive support and training from the subject leader. Access to external training is good. The subject leader is well qualified and experienced and plays a full role in the local PSHE education network.
- Effective monitoring of PSHE education takes place after each lesson through discussion with learning coordinators and feedback from learning walks. Students' work is monitored each term and sampled to ensure that they are making progress. Formal evaluation was started in spring 2011 and was used to inform the subject development plan.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- assessing and recording individual students' progress more formally and systematically.

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.

Yours sincerely

Margaret Jones
Additional Inspector