

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr J Constable
Headteacher
Langley Grammar School
Reddington Drive
Langley
Berkshire
SL3 7QS

Dear Mr Constable

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 20 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 with responsibilities for aspects of PSHE education and three groups of students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good with some outstanding features.

- Students are articulate, polite and willing to talk with confidence to visitors.
- They develop good leadership skills through a wide range of opportunities such as: mentoring younger students through buddying; becoming bullying counsellors and acting as role models; leading extra-curricular activities; and coaching sports teams as part of the sports leadership award.

- Students have a good knowledge of issues relating to sex and relationships, drugs and alcohol, especially the older students, who are able to talk with exceptional maturity about sensitive issues.
- All students know what constitutes a healthy, active lifestyle and have developed skills to be able to resist peer-pressure in a range of situations.
- Students understand the impact of bullying on others and actively challenge bullying when it occurs.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Teachers have good subject knowledge and are confident to deliver topics containing sensitive issues.
- Good opportunities are provided for students to discuss and willingly share their views in small groups and with the rest of the class.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology in lessons, both as a research resource and as a teaching tool.
- Teachers use an effective range of questioning strategies to challenge and engage students.
- Learning outcomes in teachers' planning are insufficiently focused, constraining students' potential progress.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good with some outstanding features.

- The PSHE curriculum is broad and permeates many aspects of school life.
- The curriculum provides excellent opportunities in the main school and sixth form to develop financial awareness, enterprise skills, e-safety and support for transition to the next phase of education and life beyond school.
- Students have frequent opportunities to develop a wide range of personal and social skills. For example, participation in the Duke of Edinburgh Award; working with visiting theatre companies; public speaking competitions; and leadership opportunities to work with younger students.
- The PSHE education programme, including the involvement of external speakers, is well mapped throughout the school and reviewed as a result of students' feedback.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education is satisfactory with some good features.

- A number of staff have responsibility for aspects of PSHE education, all of whom work with great commitment and dedication.

- The leadership of careers guidance, mentoring, counselling and issues related to bullying is particularly strong.
- Subject leaders make effective use of external agencies including theatre companies to extend and enrich the curriculum.
- Self-evaluation is in the early stages of development and currently lacks clarity of the impact of management actions on students' outcomes.
- Subject leaders have insufficient opportunities to monitor and support the quality of PSHE education teaching.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the subject leaders for PSHE education are provided with opportunities to monitor the quality of teaching and subsequently support individual members of staff
- ensuring that all PSHE education lessons are planned with a consistently sharp focus on learning outcomes
- ensuring that subject leaders' self-evaluation of PSHE education is evidence-based, focused on students' outcomes and leads to actions whose impact can be measured.

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

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector