

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 R Parkin
Headteacher
Lincoln The Sincil School
South Park
Lincolnshire
LN5 8EL

Dear Mr Parkin

Ofsted 2012–13 subject survey inspection programme: personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE education)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 29 May 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 five lessons and a counselling and reading recovery session.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Over their time in the school students develop very good social skills. Their behaviour improves as they learn respect for themselves and others, teamwork, trust and self-control. They are greatly helped by tutorial time which provides a daily, structured opportunity for them to reflect on their own actions and opinions and other topical issues.
- Students have a sound understanding of healthy lifestyles. They know which foods are beneficial and which to restrict, the importance of exercise for physical and mental health and the dangers of drug and alcohol misuse. However, their understanding lacks depth because they do not know the reasons behind healthy lifestyle messages.
- They have a clear understanding of aspects of risk such as road, fire and water safety and for older students this is extended to include sexual

health risks. Students know about different sorts of bullying and have good knowledge of how to stay safe on the internet. The students spoken to all feel safe in school have an adult they would rely on for help and support.

- Understanding among students about their economic well-being and personal finances is good because all participate in extensive outdoor education, trips and visits where they learn to manage their own budgets. Useful work experience and good links with the careers service ensure that students have an appropriate grasp of their continuing education and career.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are well prepared and planned with clear learning objectives. This results in a productive, calm working atmosphere and a good sense of pace and challenge. Teachers manage the social and emotional difficulties of the students sensitively and use behaviour strategies to good effect to ensure harmonious relationships in the classroom.
- A range of activities is used well to engage and motivate students. Tasks are matched carefully to the students' levels of literacy so they do not become bored or frustrated. Teaching assistants support individuals as required and play an active part in the lessons. However, in a couple of lessons the resources used were outdated or did not match the learning objectives of the lesson.
- The progress students make in improving their behaviour and social skills is carefully tracked and monitored but the acquisition of knowledge and understanding is only monitored informally by tutors.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- The school teaches the subject in a variety of ways; through the daily tutorial, discreet lessons in Years 7 and 8 taught by tutors, careers lessons in Years 9 to 11 and many accredited courses and enrichment activities. Overall these programmes emphasise skills development. As a result the curriculum is imbalanced and the teaching of aspects of factual knowledge and understanding is not entirely coherent or mapped across the school.
- The quality and breadth of the enrichment activities make an outstanding contribution to the development of PSHE skills and self-esteem, and are accessible to all. For example, the school's sport college specialism provides opportunities for students to develop teamwork, leadership skills and safety awareness. Some students take on responsibilities such as being House Captains and members of the active school council which has recently participated in the process of interviewing for new staff.

- The curriculum provides a range of PSHE-related accredited courses which enhances opportunities. These include the first aid courses across the school and the Preparation for Working Life GCSE for older students.
- Students who have recently joined the school or who are experiencing particular difficulties are well supported with a range of different intervention strategies such as counselling and anger management sessions.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- PSHE education and well-being permeate all aspects of school life and contribute effectively to improvement, achievement and the quality of students' experience. The programme is responsive to local need.
- The subject is part of the physical and social faculty and enjoys high status because of the nature of the school. The head of faculty, who was recently appointed as subject leader, is well supported by senior staff and has made effective use of support from the local authority and the subject association.
- Outline schemes of work are in place for Years 7 and 8 but have yet to be fully developed to ensure that all aspects of PSHE education are covered. This is included in the well-targeted subject development plan which provides a good basis for further improvement. However, no audit of provision across different subjects and courses has been carried out.
- Some monitoring and lesson observations have taken place by senior staff and the school has an accurate picture of its performance.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing and rebalancing schemes of work and mapping provision across the key stages so that there is more emphasis on students acquiring in-depth factual knowledge and understanding
- assessing more formally knowledge and understanding, especially for younger students.

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

Margaret Jones
Additional Inspector