

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 Heeley
Headteacher
The Whitby High School
Sycamore Drive
Whitby
Cheshire
CH66 2NU

Dear Mr Heeley

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 13 and 14 June 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.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is outstanding.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Students make exceptional progress with their personal and social skills as they move throughout the school. They develop high levels of self-awareness and discuss issues maturely in lessons and in written work. Their understanding of forms of bullying, including those linked with prejudice such as homophobia, is very well developed.
- Older and younger students display excellent knowledge and understanding of issues related to health, emotional well-being, sex, relationships, drugs and the use of technology. Skilful exploration of the risks associated with these issues ensures that students have excellent understanding of how to keep themselves and others safe.

- Students of all ages take up the many opportunities for leadership and to support others. This includes for example, delivering parts of lessons, peer mentoring, reading support, helping with school administration, supporting children in local primary schools, becoming involved in the local council and acting as prefects. As a result, they demonstrate high levels of social responsibility.
- Students' knowledge of financial issues is extensive throughout the school. This includes aspects such as the cost of borrowing, banking services, ways to finance higher education and how to deal with debt. They are also well informed about where to go to for advice for careers, training and education within and outside of the school.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Teachers are exceptionally skilled in promoting safe and secure learning environments to enable students to discuss sensitive, personal issues. In lessons observed, teachers demonstrated excellent subject knowledge to support detailed answers to questions and to challenge students' views. As a result, teachers command the respect and trust of students.
- Lessons are very well planned and ensure that key learning points are reviewed throughout and at the end of lessons. Assessment tasks including self-assessment are built effectively into schemes of work and students have a clear idea of their progress.
- Teachers monitor students in lessons attentively and provide excellent opportunities for them to work in different groups as well as independently. Questioning is used very effectively to challenge and support students of different abilities.
- Resources are wide-ranging and stimulating, including information and communication technology which is used effectively to engage students in research for homework and in lessons such as those related to careers.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Discrete lessons enable excellent coverage of issues and continuity in learning. Programmes of study are thorough and build on students' previous knowledge and understanding. The curriculum is also responsive to students' feedback and experiences.
- The school's special educational needs coordinator and learning mentor help to enhance the expertise and support for parents, carers and students. For example, students with special educational needs with their parents and carers access bespoke support for sex and relationships education. Groups of students in challenging circumstances are also given tailored programmes on issues related to gun and knife crime and teenage pregnancy.

- External contributors help to extend the range and rich quality of the curriculum for all age groups. Students are well prepared for further study or employment through access to information events run by local university and college providers. Students benefit from mentoring by business professionals, visits from technology apprenticeship organisations and related work experience opportunities. Agencies and groups are also brought into the school to deliver advice or to promote awareness of issues such as sexuality and the experiences of refugees and Traveller communities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- Senior leaders provide excellent support and commitment to PSHE education. As a result, the subject has a high profile within the school.
- Very strong subject leadership ensures constant improvement, high levels of expertise, high-quality training, and a strong passion for the subject. High expectations of staff are maintained through regular training and the provision of good-quality resources.
- Self-evaluation is strong and shows excellent awareness of effective practice in PSHE education. Some monitoring of teaching through learning walks by the subject leader takes place, but this is infrequent. However, observations inform plans for improvement, including the need for further monitoring of teaching and the refinement of assessment and monitoring systems.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- extending the range and frequency of the monitoring of teaching, learning and assessment, to maintain high levels of achievement.

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

Clarice Nelson-Rowe
Additional Inspector