

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6644
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr Lovett
Headteacher
Tiverton High School
Bolham Road
Tiverton
Devon
EX16 6SQ

Dear Mr Lovett

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Personal Social and Health Education (PSHE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and students, during my visit on 06-07 November 2006 to look at work in PSHE.

The visit provided valuable information which will contribute to our evaluation and reporting. Any published report is likely to list the names of the institutions visited, but we would not identify individual institutions within the report itself.

The evidence used to inform the judgements I made included: interviews with members of the schools' leadership and management team, the Key Stage managers, the subject leader for PSHE, the Chair of Governors, key members of the support staff and the catering manager, scrutiny of school documentation including the department evaluation form, analysis of students' work, observation of three lessons and discussions with students.

I undertook to provide a brief written version of the main points made in my feedback at the end of the visit, to support development in PSHE. This follows:

The overall effectiveness of PSHE is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Students are developing their subject knowledge and understanding and make good progress as they move through the school.
- They are able to reflect on and discuss their understanding of issues and show considerable respect for the feelings and views of others.

They are right in their view that this contributes to the good relationships that exist in the school as they show interest in and respect for the views of others.

Personal development and well-being

The personal development and well-being of the students is good with outstanding features.

- Students have a good understanding of the importance of a healthy lifestyle. As they move up the school they develop their understanding of sexual health risks and of drugs and their effects.
- Students feel safe. They report that the school responds appropriately to any issues of bullying.
- The involvement of students in the community is outstanding.
- Students have a good understanding of their personal achievements. At key points, such as Year 9 options, they are well supported so that they are able to make choices that reflect this good understanding of their potential.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers' lesson planning is good and is based on the detailed guidance provided by the subject leader. The subsequent lessons set high expectations of the students. Lessons proceed at a good pace with effective use made of a range of appropriate teaching methods that include paired and group work as well as general discussions. The students respond enthusiastically and are eager participants in all aspects of their learning.

Curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The newly revised curriculum meets the needs of the students. The programme is planned effectively and provides continuity and progression of learning.
- There are good links with work in other subjects. The school's visual arts specialist status is making a significant contribution to PSHE and citizenship through, for example, the outstanding art work in Year 7 on the theme of respect.

Student support and guidance

The quality of support and guidance for the students is outstanding.

- The roles of tutors and Key Stage managers are clearly defined. They, and the students, receive excellent support from key staff such as the welfare officer.
- Students also benefit from excellent academic support. They are set challenging targets and receive regular feedback on their progress.
- Students are rightly concerned that community perceptions of their school are inaccurate.

Leadership and management

Subject leadership and management are good.

- The subject leader has reviewed and written high quality guidance for her team.
- All statutory requirements are fully met.

Specific focus of the inspection: healthy eating

- The quality of the school meal policy is good.
- The school is working towards meeting the new food standards required for school meals.
- The choice of meals is good. Most students select healthy meals and enjoy the social opportunity that lunch gives them.
- The food technology department has made a good start towards improving students' practical skills.

Inclusion

- The students feel that everyone in the school is valued. Relationships between students and with the staff are good. Teaching and learning and the high quality curriculum are well matched to the needs of the students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consider the extent to which careers education and guidance can be provided by tutors as well as the PSHE programme
- determine the extent to which external agencies can continue to provide support to meet the needs of the students.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Peter Griffiths
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools