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28 June 2007

Mrs P Dixon
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Dixon

Ofsted Survey Inspection Programme: Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 12 and 13 June 2007 to look at work in PSHE.

As outlined in our initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on:

- How the PSHE curriculum met the specific needs of pupils in your local area, and how progress was tracked and assessed; and,
- What contribution PSHE made to the future economic well-being of your pupils.

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 should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the school first. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with yourself and the assistant headteacher, the Personal Social and Religious Education co-ordinator, Healthy Schools workers, learning mentor, active playground leader, pupils from Years 7 and 10, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of four lessons, part of an evening music concert and two assemblies and form tutor time.

The overall effectiveness of Personal, Social and Health Education was judged to be good with many outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- In some classes pupils make outstanding progress as a result of in-depth discussion and reflection on their lifestyles. Teachers involve pupils in purposeful and realistic activities, which capture their imagination and enhance their learning.
- Pupils know what is meant by a balanced diet and how to keep healthy. Older pupils have very good knowledge of the dangers of smoking and alcohol.
- They are very much aware of peer group pressure and have practised strategies to deal with this. Pupils are less secure in their knowledge of citizenship.
- Personal development is outstanding. Pupils enjoy their work and have positive attitudes towards the subject. They behave extremely well and are developing the confidence and the vocabulary to discuss their personal feelings.
- Pupils work well together and are able to listen, reflect, discuss and present their own opinions confidently. Their independent research skills are well developed. They feel well prepared for adult life.

Quality of Teaching and Learning of PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is good.

- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and excellent classroom discipline. They have high expectations of both behaviour and learning, have excellent relationships with their pupils and act as excellent role models.
- Planning is generally good and provides a wide range of activities which stimulate and engage pupils. Where planning is not as good, there is not enough focus on measurable learning outcomes and the lesson is dominated by the teacher.
- Assessment is good. It is planned into units of work and takes different formats. There are clear grading system and criteria for assessment.
- Outstanding support and guidance is provided for identified pupils who are experiencing difficulties. Pupils are very well supported and feel safe and secure in school.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- The curriculum meets the needs of pupils because the teachers know them so well and, as a result, there is a good match of content and activities to meet pupils' needs.

- The school has gained the Healthy School Award and this has had a positive impact on the provision for PSHE.
- The recently introduced Active Playground Scheme is outstanding. It is thoroughly enjoyed by pupils who say that "lunchtimes are now fun". It encourages a healthy, physical activity and inter-personal skills.
- Visiting speakers are well planned into the curriculum at key points to supplement and reinforce provision and are much appreciated by pupils.
- Careers education and guidance and work-related learning are well provided for and there are good links with the Connexions service.

Leadership and management of subject

The leadership and management of PSHE are good.

- PSHE has high status in the school and permeates the whole curriculum and school environment.
- The high quality of display work throughout the school covers every aspect of the *Every Child Matters* agenda and encourages pupils to reflect and aspire.
- The leadership and management of PSHE are in a stage of transition, with the previous outstanding leader retaining line management responsibility for the subject.
- The development plan for the subject has objectives which cover the appropriate areas but the phasing lacks clarity.
- Monitoring and evaluation have improved since the previous inspection report and observations of teaching are accurate.
- Two teachers have completed the PSHE certificate and most of the teaching is by the specialist team. This has raised the quality of provision and the department is working towards all teaching being by specialist staff.

Subject issue: How well are pupils prepared for future economic well-being?

This aspect is outstanding.

- Pupils are very well prepared for adult life. Girls report they are well supported in making career choices by tutors, the Connexions service and learning mentors.
- Pupils are all provided with a range of activities where they take responsibility and are expected to use their initiative.
- Financial literacy is taught by the mathematics department. It is well planned and covers important issues such as credit and debt.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

- The school is committed to providing for the full range of needs and abilities.
- Pupils from minority ethnic backgrounds are fully integrated into the life and work of the school, and achieve as well as other pupils. All pupils are made aware of, and appreciate, the diversity of multi-cultural society.
- All staff strive to ensure that all girls are included in activities and none are disadvantaged.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising the quality of teaching in PSHE to that of the best
- monitoring closely the new leadership of PSHE to ensure that positive momentum is sustained.

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

As we explained in our 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

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector of Schools