

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs Sandra Herring
Headteacher
The Howbridge Infant School
Dengie Close
Witham
Essex
CM8 1DJ

Dear Mrs Herring

Ofsted Subject Inspection Programme 2006/7 – PSHE

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff and pupils, during my visit on Thursday 29 March to look at work in PSHE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject including assessment and working with parents, the visit had a particular focus on assessing the impact of the school's PSHE programme, particularly the work on Healthy Schools, on children's attitudes and the progress they make.

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 yourself, the deputy headteacher and the PSHE subject leader, scrutiny of school documentation including the SEF, SDP, policy and schemes of work, analysis of pupils' work, observation of a celebration assembly, playtime and lunchtime and observation of three parts of lessons and brief visit to each class.

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.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

- The effective PSHE programme helps to create a firm foundation on which good learning takes place. Children settle well in school because of the

effective induction programme and clear and consistent expectations of staff.

- From low standards on entry to school, pupils make good progress in Reception and reach standards at the end of the Foundation Stage that is slightly below the Essex averages in all areas of learning. They build successfully on this good start so that, for example, in the 2006 national assessments, pupils reached above average standards in reading, writing and mathematics.
- Pupils achieve well throughout the school and standards have risen over the last three years.
- Pupils develop good attitudes to work and behave well. They enjoy school. Consequently, time is not wasted and the pace of learning throughout the day is good. Pupils are encouraged to explore their own feelings and understand how others might feel. They learn how to relate well to adults and each other and develop good relationships during work and play. They also learn how to take turns, listen and follow rules.
- Pupils develop confidence as they move through the school. Work in the school council prepares them well for later life as they play an active role in shaping the school. They are pleased with how they are able to improve their environment and understand the importance of issues such as recycling.

Quality of teaching and learning

- Teaching and learning are good because staff have a good understanding of the subject and see the personal development of pupils as a key feature of the school's work. They are involved with the development of the PSHE programme and consequently there is a consistency of approach throughout the school.
- Teaching assistants are fully involved and develop their own expertise such as the weekly teaching of circle time in every class or managing the daily snack time. Here, they create a good learning environment in which pupils are keen to become involved.
- Pupils are fully aware of the rules of circle time and abide by them. They are keen to put across their own opinions and respect the views of others.
- Planning is generally good with clear objectives that are explained to pupils so that they know what they are going to do and learn. Questioning is effective and skilfully develops pupils' thinking.
- Because there is a safe and supportive atmosphere in lessons and high expectations throughout the school, pupils respond well. Staff manage pupils' learning well and maintain their interests so pupils enjoy their learning.
- Overall, staff satisfactorily assess pupils' learning in PSHE and know their pupils' well. However, there is no whole school system of assessing pupils' personal development or recording their successes and achievements.
- Pupils receive good care, guidance and pastoral support. A 'Kids Club' is run on school premises before and after school as well as Holiday Club

activities. The care of vulnerable pupils is enhanced through an effective multi-agency approach which is well established over several years.

- Teaching assistants are well trained in areas such as speech therapy and the provision of gym trail so that pupils' individual needs are well supported. The school works effectively within a consortium to address issues such as the Every Child Matters agenda and provide support from a Children's Counsellor.
- Pupils' views are taken seriously and acted upon, for example, through the introduction of a credit card system of rewards which pupils think is good. The school celebrates pupils' success well, for example, through Pupil of the Week, Celebration Assemblies, Golden Award and weekly raffle tickets given to pupils for 'making good choices'. All these act as effective motivators for developing pupils' independence and good behaviour. Class rules are regularly reviewed by the pupils and changed when necessary.
- The PSHE curriculum is good because it meets the needs and interests of pupils and encourages their enjoyment in learning. It is promoted through daily interaction between staff and pupils, assemblies, formal lessons such as science and literacy, circle times and snack times.
- Good links with other subjects are made. Work in reception shows how children are encouraged to make friends, thereby making their transition to school easier. Links with the junior school are particularly good.

Subject leadership and management

- PSHE is central to the work of the school. It helps to support the school's clear mission statement. The school's effective development plan highlights appropriate areas for improvement covering several in relation to pupils' personal development. The school has a clear understanding of its strengths and areas for development and uses the expertise from within the school and outside to further improve provision and practice.
- The role of subject leader has developed considerably over the last couple of years so that PSHE now has a high profile in the school. The policy and curriculum are changed to reflect new national guidance and the needs of pupils. The school is developing its satisfactory monitoring and evaluation of the effectiveness of pupils' personal development through, for example, using the evaluation schedule/audit for Healthy Schools. The school's evaluation of its work in PSHE is accurate. It acknowledges the strengths which result in good behaviour, attitudes and relationships and feels that staff need to keep working with parents to improve attendance.

Subject issue: impact of PSHE

The school has been successful in encouraging pupils to live healthier lives and its work has been recognised by the Healthy Schools Award. Pupils' good understanding is beginning to impact on what they do. Many said they were more willing to try out unfamiliar fruit and vegetables and they understand the need for a balanced diet. The school gives each child a water bottle so they regularly drink water throughout the school day. The before school club,

snack time and healthy school meals ensure that pupils have appropriate opportunities to eat throughout the day and consequently they are ready to learn. Quite a few parents support the school by providing healthy lunch boxes for their children.

Inclusion

Inclusion has a high priority within the school and is central to its work. Staff are effective in developing pupils' understanding of unacceptable behaviour and help to create positive attitudes to anti-racism and anti-bullying. Pupils with learning difficulties and disabilities are well supported and have clear and appropriate individual education plans with achievable targets.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing ways in which the school monitors the impact of its work in PSHE
- investigating ways of further assessing pupils' personal development and developing manageable ways of recording their successes and achievements
- continuing to work with parents to encourage their greater involvement.

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

As I explained, a copy of this letter will be sent to your Local Authority and will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Ruth Frith
Additional Inspector