

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



20 November 2007

Mr James O'Neill
Principal
Carmel RC College
Darlington
County Durham
DL3 8RW

Dear Mr O'Neill

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

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

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

- how the PSHE curriculum meets the specific needs of pupils in your local area, and how progress is tracked and assessed; and
- the contribution made by PSHE 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 individual institutions will not be identified in the main text. 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 discussions with yourself and several members of staff, interviews with students, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of students' work and observations of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be outstanding.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PSHE is outstanding.

- Students' behaviour in PSHE is excellent.
- Students of all abilities maintain PSHE folders of work that show their commitment to the subject.
- They make excellent progress in their personal development and have a mature understanding about how to stay fit and healthy. Many students take part in at least one of the many extra curricular activities.
- Students respond well to the high levels of care they receive.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHE

The quality of teaching and learning in PSHE is outstanding.

- The lessons observed had strong features including use of 'information bursts' to get over key points and the use of educational software.
- Students are clear about what they are expected to achieve over the course of the term.
- The assessment of their progress is rigorous and well documented. Each piece of work is 'signed off' by teachers.
- The emotional well being of students' is prioritised. Support is precisely targeted, including through the Emmaus Centre.
- The support and guidance provided to students is comprehensive. Induction is good and they are well aware of their next steps.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- The subject content is explicitly matched to the 'Every Child Matters' agenda. This drives provision in Years 7 to 13.
- PSHE complements students' learning in citizenship.
- There is an extensive range of sport, music and other activities that enable all students to pursue their interests.
- Students embrace involvement in a wide range of charitable activities, benefiting from many links with schools abroad.
- Students value the input from external 'experts'.
- There is inconsistency in the way the subject is reported to parents.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE is outstanding.

- The school's evaluation of its provision is accurate, and is based on substantial portfolios of evidence including the monitoring of PSHE related lessons by school leaders.

- There is a 'hard edge' to provision with the senior leadership team setting high standards.
- The pastoral learning managers map out a comprehensive curriculum, including for the sixth form. They measure the impact of provision.
- Parents and carers are well supported through the transition work for Year 7 and preparation for Key Stage 4.
- Academic Mentoring Days are an effective way of communicating with parents and carers about students' progress, as is the school's developing use of text and email.
- The intranet is used very effectively by teachers to record and track students' performance.

Subject issue - preparation for economic well-being

Students are very well prepared for further study and the world of work.

The curriculum is focused on raising students' aspirations. All students in Years 10 and 11 study a vocational course. The progress made by students is meticulously tracked by tutors and is overseen by the personal learning managers. Subject leaders identify how the work of their department impacts on students' economic well being. The strong student council has a developing influence on the life and work of the college. Sixth formers model their own management structure on the school's leadership team.

Inclusion

Inclusion is outstanding.

- Students' gifts and talents are well documented and fostered.
- Vulnerable students are nurtured, especially in Years 7 to 9.
- Older students look after the younger ones.
- Each student has an individual learning plan.
- Careers education and guidance are effective because the retention rate from Year 11 into the sixth form is high and few students leave once they embark on their courses.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure all reports to parents set out clearly the knowledge and understanding gained by students over time.

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

Henry Moreton
Additional Inspector