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Mr D Price
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Dear Mr Price

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 08 November 2007 to look at work in PSHE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of PSHE, 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: interviews with yourself and several members of staff, discussion with the school council and observation of the Year 7 council at work, scrutiny of documentation, analysis of students' work, observation of the Year 10 assembly and three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PSHE is satisfactory.

- Over time students develop a sound understanding of how to stay safe and the importance of health.
- Many students welcome opportunities to contribute to their school community, as shown by the significant sums raised to refurbish the lavatories and their production of an induction booklet for Year 7.
- Most students reflect on issues maturely, but if they do not value the lesson they show their disinterest.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is satisfactory.

- An effective lesson was seen where students were tutored by visitors from the NSPCC (the National Society for the Prevention of cruelty to Children).
- Other lessons did not enthuse students as much because they were not able to engage in meaningful discussions about the subject matter.
- Teachers focus on nurturing student's attitudes to learning.
- Effective use is made of 'experts' such as the school nurse.
- Students' personal well being is supported effectively by the school counsellors and learning mentors.
- Effective use is made of the tutor time and assemblies to reinforce the school's key messages.
- Teachers do not systematically assess and record students' progress as they move through the school from Years 7 to 13.
- Teachers' reports to parents are generally helpful though reporting on the skills, knowledge and understanding is patchy.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements but provision is not mapped out to show clear progression over time from Year 7 through to Year 13.
- Content is closely interrelated with citizenship.
- Students value the input from visiting 'experts'.
- Parents are involved in raising aspirations through the 'Aim Higher' initiative.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are satisfactory.

- The role of form tutors is developing to focus on monitoring students' attitudes to learning.
- Managers are diligent in addressing racism, bullying and homophobia.
- Teachers are developing their expertise in PSHE through timely training.
- Students, parents and governors are not involved enough in developments or evaluation.
- The impact of the different aspects of the subject are not systematically evaluated.

Subject issue – preparation for economic well-being

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

Students value the opportunity to access the independent study centre (ISC) before and after school. Provision in careers education and guidance (CEG) is good. Students benefit from a range of enterprise activities and are provided with helpful information about opportunities in higher education in order to raise their aspirations. Those who study business and related subjects develop good work related skills and their capability in financial awareness is developing well. Links with local employers are good.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

This is a caring school community and students value being part of the St Benedict's 'family'. They see the PSHE as an important part of their education. Every month each tutor group elect a 'tutee' of the month; students aspire to this. However, the school is not yet able to ensure that all students progressively develop knowledge and understanding in all aspects of PSHE as they move through the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- map out provision in all aspects of the subject for all students
- improve consistency in assessment, recording and reporting
- involve parents and governors in developments and evaluation.

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