

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mrs Wheatman
Headteacher
Laurence Jackson School
Church Lane
Guisborough
TS14 6RD

Dear Mrs Wheatman

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 20-21 November 2007 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 students 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 students.

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, the PSHE co-ordinator, the Enterprise co-ordinator, the Healthy School managers, a group of Year 10 students, and the Head Boy and Girl, a Year 8 assembly, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement in PSHE is satisfactory.

- Students make good progress in developing their personal skills. Behaviour is good and students are friendly and polite. They enjoy and value their work in PSHE.

- All students appreciate the need for regular physical activity to stay healthy.
- Students understand the five fruit and vegetable message but some are confused about what is meant by a 'balanced diet'.
- Students know why bullying is wrong in general but they do not understand that bullying can take different forms.
- Older students have good knowledge about the effects of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco.
- Knowledge and understanding of other aspects of the PSHE curriculum is rather superficial because not enough time is allocated, particularly in Key Stage 3.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationships with students; they exert strong discipline and have effective classroom management skills.
- Teachers make very effective use of information and communications technology (ICT).
- Teachers are not always confident in their subject knowledge because they lack specialist training. As a result, expectations are too low.
- Lack of time on the curriculum limits the range of methods teachers can use.
- There are strong elements of care for students. All students felt there was an adult in whom they could confide if they had a problem.
- Assessment practice is developing, but teacher comments concentrate on behaviour rather than progress in the subject area.

Quality of the PSHE curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall.

- There are several strong features of the curriculum. These include the use of the specialist sports college status to ensure all students recognise the need for physical activity, the Healthy Schools Award which has had a positive impact, the Eco School Award, and the work of the school council.
- The school has replaced Personal Development lessons with a Life Skills programme and accreditation at Key Stage 4. This has been successful in terms of students' positive perception of its higher status and clear schemes of work are in place.
- However, the curriculum is imbalanced at Key Stage 3. The PSHE programme is intended to include citizenship and careers education and guidance, but for lack of time, satisfactory requirements for them are not met.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are satisfactory.

- The recently appointed coordinator has worked hard and successfully to improve provision in the subject. He is enthusiastic and experienced and has completed accurate observations of lessons and very accurate self-evaluation.
- Senior leadership has not ensured statutory requirements are met; there is insufficient time allocated for PSHE, lack of a specialist teaching team and lack of planned training.

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

Students are well prepared for adult life.

Students from Year 9 begin to explore the world of work through Careers Conventions, Enterprise week, work experience and units in Life Skills on business and enterprise, budgeting and personal finance.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- There is some evidence of differentiation in PSHE lessons.
- Little work is done on preparation for life in a multi-cultural society until Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- develop more innovative assessment tasks for PSHE
- build up a specialist team of teachers who are experienced and confident in their knowledge of PSHE
- review the curriculum to ensure students' needs are met, the PSHE curriculum is covered well and statutory requirements are met.

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

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector