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Dear Mrs Bates

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 21 and 22 January 2008 to look at work in PSHE.

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 staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE is judged to be outstanding.

Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is outstanding.

- Students' personal development is excellent. They have positive attitudes towards PSHE as exemplified by the way they support each

other in lessons and around the school. Teachers encourage team work by routinely planning for students to 'buddy' each other.

- Students' confidence is developed very well because of their participation in the very many enrichment and extra curricular activities. This includes an extensive range of visits and visitors relating to PSHE.
- Students' knowledge and understanding of sex and relationship education, and their awareness of drugs, is good as a result of the systematic provision in these areas. Provision is enhanced through the support staff such as the transition worker, nurse, chaplain and counsellor, who all provide excellent advice and guidance.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying and play their part in eradicating any incidents that occur, as exemplified by the 'listening post' managed by sixth formers.
- Students discuss and debate issues such as democracy, and out of lessons they exercise leadership through driving forward initiatives like the 'cafe scientifique', and are involved in developments such as the 'New Build' and 'Environment' groups.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is outstanding.

- There were many outstanding features in the lessons observed. Students enjoy and value PSHE lessons and activities.
- Teachers' lesson planning routinely addresses enterprise activities, as well as safety, health, enjoyment, contribution to the community and economic well-being.
- Students' progress in PSHE is assessed very effectively and outcomes are monitored rigorously, and well recorded. Assessment regimes in Year 7, for example, are exemplary by clearly charting the skills, knowledge and understanding acquired after each piece of work.
- Reports to parents are quite helpful but they lack enough detail about students' progress in all aspects of the subject, as distinct from citizenship.
- The support and guidance, and additional support in the basic skills, provided to students is focussed and responds to specific needs.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is outstanding.

- Students' confidence and social skills are very well developed through an exceptionally rich and diverse extra curricular programme, often with a foreign language component.
- Their personal development is greatly enhanced by an extensive enrichment programme, with school leaders evidencing how students benefit from these activities.
- An expansive range of enrichment activities support the personal development of sixth form students.

- Students are supported in their learning by guidance on how to learn effectively, workshops on how to eat healthily and visiting road shows.
- School managers routinely ask students and their parents about the impact of different aspects of the PSHE curriculum.
- Managers successfully pilot and evaluate initiatives such as those relating to enterprise, and subsequently roll them out.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are outstanding.

- School managers take a collective responsibility for PSHE which means that provision in the subject underpins the school's work.
- School managers encourage staff to be innovative and to use their skills to contribute to the specialist content of the PSHE curriculum such as the de-stressing sessions for sixth formers.
- The monitoring of PSHE related activities by senior managers, including the provision during the tutor periods, is rigorous.
- School managers have put in place a raft of well qualified staff to look after the personal and social needs of students. For example, the transition worker spends six months in the feeder primary schools working with pupils in Year 6, and then six months with them when they arrive in Year 7. This ensures they settle very quickly.
- Self evaluation of PSHE is accurate, robust and self critical. Effective use is made of reference groups and surveys (including externally validated surveys that comment on aspects of PSHE).

Subject issue: preparation for future economic well being

Students are very well prepared for adult life.

- Students relish opportunities to take responsibility, including for others. Sixth formers, for example, are involved in supporting younger students in their work and in leading in several sports.
- They have a very good understanding of how to manage their personal finances because of the amount of time devoted to the many enterprise activities.
- Guidance and support within the sixth form for progression to Higher Education are excellent.
- The development of students' work related skills are exceptional, with a series of activities such as the popular 'duck days' and 'who wants to be a linguist'. These sessions are often supported by external 'experts'.
- The school manager has a good understanding of the needs of local employers and has extended work experience opportunities and the vocational curriculum.
- A large number of students develop their awareness of others through their involvement in work on behalf of charities and the extensive links with overseas schools, particularly in India and Brazil.

Inclusion

- Students who are vulnerable are exceptionally well provided for, with a PSHE curriculum that changes from year to year to match the needs of individuals.
- The growing number of students from 'new Europe' are very well integrated into the school community and managers take opportunities to use their language skills to enhance curriculum provision for all.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the reports to parents to set out students' progress in the different aspects of PSHE.

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 the local Learning and Skills Council 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