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Mr S Haigh
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Dear Mr Haigh

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 05 and 06 February 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 interviews with staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work, observation of four lessons (including three with yourself) and lunchtime activities, and visits to the girls' group and the breakfast club.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be good.

Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Pupils' personal development is good. They have good knowledge of the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs, and good understanding about how to safeguard their sexual health.
- Pupils value PSHE lessons because they get to know their classmates better. They enjoy the contributions from the visiting 'experts'.
- Older pupils have a good understanding of the opportunities available to them after they leave school, and are well prepared.
- They greatly value the responsibility of working with pupils in the primary schools, and being mentors to Year 7.
- The Junior Sports Leaders make a good contribution in the local primary schools.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is good.

- Effective use is made of learning mentors to ensure that each pupil is well known and supported. This is underpinned by the very effective house system which is rightly highly regarded by pupils and staff.
- Teachers use ongoing assessment effectively, including pupils' self and peer assessment.
- Reports to parents clearly identify pupils' progress in each of the strands of PSHE.
- In the four lessons seen pupils were very well behaved and very attentive. Their confidence in making oral contributions was less effective.
- Teachers have good awareness of how pupils are doing in the various strands of PSHE but do not set targets for individuals in the subject.

Quality of the curriculum

The PSHE curriculum is outstanding.

- It is very responsive to the needs of pupils and takes their views into account by asking them how well it meets their needs.
- Teachers are well supported by external 'experts' who deliver sessions on drugs and sexual health. Effective support is also provided by youth workers, the attendance and inclusion officers, and the school counsellor.
- The school has gained the Healthy School Award and this has had a positive impact on lunchtime and healthy eating. The breakfast club is very well attended and enables many pupils to start the day well.
- Professional actors are used well to reinforce key messages through the 'stand up, stand out' drama production with the script written by pupils.
- The local soccer club is used very well to improve attitudes to learning through the 'tackle it' and 'playing for success' programmes.
- The Junior Intermediate Labour Market course for targeted pupils greatly enhances their employability.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE is good.

- The subject leader and the assistant subject leader set out a comprehensive programme across all years which clearly identifies the objectives pupils are to achieve.
- The detailed lesson plans, teacher guides and pupil workbooks provided, support teachers' work in the different strands of the subject.
- Teachers are encouraged to develop their interests and areas of expertise.
- The formal monitoring and evaluation of the weekly PSHE lessons by school managers is not systematic.

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

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

- The work of the year councils and the school council enable pupils to show initiative and take responsibility, and pupils learn to care for their environment through the 'ground force' team.
- Pupils are given good advice about how to manage their personal finances.
- The use of a 'champion' gives the enterprise activities a high profile across all the subjects.
- Pupils learn about the international dimension through the developing links with schools in several countries.

Inclusion

- The school has a harmonious ethos where the pupils are very respectful of each other and the staff.
- The school provides additional support for disaffected boys and vulnerable girls.
- The school holds the 'anti-bullying' charter mark.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- set targets for each pupil to reach in PSHE
- introduce more rigorous monitoring and evaluation of PSHE lessons.

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