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30 December 2008

Mr A Porteous
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Dear Mr Porteous

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 26 and 27 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils'
work and observation of PSHE lessons.

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 about how to safeguard their wellbeing, including their sexual health.
- Students value their roles as representatives of their mixed aged forms on the student council, as school 'officers', proctors and mentors. Their self confidence is reflected in their election of a Year 7 student as chair of the student council.
- They have a good understanding of the job and career opportunities available to them and are well prepared for their choices.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is good.

- The two subject specialists set very high standards and are excellent role models. The small team of non-specialists are well supported, including on how to tackle sensitive and controversial issues.
- Students are active in lessons, often working in groups and using different learning styles. They use computers to 'acti-vote' and 'SMOODLE' (the school forum) to share ideas and discuss issues.
- The vertical tutor groups and houses underpin learning in PSHE, and both are highly regarded by students.
- Teachers assess students' progress effectively; students' self and peer assessment is developing well.
- Reports to parents do not clearly identify the progress made by students in each of the strands of PSHE.

Quality of the curriculum

The PSHE curriculum is good.

- The curriculum tackles relevant and topical issues such as neglect, violence, conflict resolution, internet safety and different addictions.
- Teachers are well supported by external 'experts' who deliver sessions on drugs and sexual health.
- Support for students' wellbeing is well provided for through 'drop in' and counselling sessions.
- The school has gained the Healthy School Award and this has a positive impact on healthy eating.
- The range of sporting and other curriculum activities makes a valuable contribution to PSHE and a high proportion of students participate.
- Students respond very well to the many responsibilities they are given throughout the school but they do not have the chance to contribute to the development of the PSHE curriculum.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are good.

- The subject leader sets out a comprehensive programme across all years which clearly identify the objectives students are to achieve.
- Teaching and learning in PSHE is very well integrated with provision in citizenship.
- The detailed lesson plans and resources provide effective support for non-specialist teachers.
- The monitoring and evaluation of the weekly PSHE lessons by school managers is systematic.
- The school's evaluation of its provision in PSHE, and what it needs to do to improve, is accurate.

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

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

- Virtually every student who leaves school enters one of the local sixth forms or colleges, training or work.
- The work of the student council, including its committees, enables students to show initiative and take responsibility.
- Students are given good advice about how to manage their personal finances, and a Youth Bank is developing.
- Team work and problem solving skills are well developed through activities such as 'Roboday'.
- Students learn about the international dimension through the links with schools in South Africa.
- Some students follow a useful 'preparation for working life' course, while others are part of a 'social enterprise' group that develops their self esteem.

Inclusion

- The school provides additional support for gifted and talented, and vulnerable students.
- Some vulnerable students benefit from aspects of a social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme.
- Students are able to pursue their individual interests through, for example, the Duke of Edinburgh and the Junior Sports Leader award schemes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure reports to parents show the progress made in all of the strands of PSHE
- give students opportunities to contribute to the development of the PSHE curriculum.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE in the school.

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