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Mr Chapman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Chapman

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 10 and 11 March 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 three PSHE lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE is judged to be good.

Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Students' personal development is good. They have positive attitudes towards PSHE and particularly enjoy the visiting 'experts' who are brought in to deliver some activities.
- Students' knowledge, understanding and awareness of the issues around sex and drugs are good as a result of the systematic provision, underpinned by the teachers' very good subject knowledge.

- Students' confidence is developed well because of their involvement in changes in the school such as to the curriculum and pastoral system.
- Sixth formers benefit greatly from the opportunity of working with a governor to help younger students deal with the trials of teenage life, including the actual delivery of sex and relationship education.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying and play their part in challenging any incidents that occur.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is good.

- Subject knowledge is very good with the two principal teachers gaining a specialist qualification in the subject.
- Marking of student's work is regular and supportive.
- Students' progress in PSHE is assessed well, especially at Key Stage 3, with peer and self-assessment, as well as regular testing.
- Reports to parents are helpful because they set out action points as well as recording how well students are progressing.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Students' social skills and citizenship are well developed through a rich extra curricular programme, and developing international links.
- Each year managers ask students about what aspects of PSHE work well, and what could be improved.
- Teachers are developing the use of the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) materials.
- PSHE related activities in drama and science are well recorded.
- Parents and governors are consulted about PSHE provision, including through the school's website.
- The school has achieved 'CareerMark', and is working towards the 'Healthy School' award.
- The 'skills programme' for sixth formers enhances provision, though not all students take full advantage of it.
- Classrooms are not suitably resourced to teach the subject creatively.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are good.

- The two principal teachers, including the 'faculty advocate', are very experienced in leading on sex, relationships and drugs education.
- Staff and governors benefit very well from the in-house degree programme that includes developments in peer mentoring and the student voice.
- School leaders prioritise students' well-being, as instanced by the 'eSafety' programme.
- Self-evaluation of PSHE is broadly accurate following ongoing reviews, though it is over generous in some aspects.
- Monitoring of teaching and learning in PSHE lessons is not rigorous enough.

Subject issue: preparation for future economic well being

Students are well prepared for adult life.

- During lunchtimes careers advice is available for all students.
- Students have a good understanding of how to manage their personal finances through enterprise, action for employment (A4E) and financial capability lessons.
- School managers have a secure understanding of the needs of local employers and provide good work experience opportunities, as well as a developing vocational curriculum.
- School leavers successfully move on to a range of training and employment opportunities, with a significant proportion of sixth formers entering higher education.

Inclusion

- The PSHE curriculum changes from year to year to match needs.
- The school has established effective links with the Pakistani and Somali communities, focusing on student achievement.
- As a result of the drive to develop consultation and participation, the students' voice is developing beyond the student council.
- Well supported by teaching assistants, the 'Circle of Friends' enables students to meet on a regular basis to offer support to each other.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring arrangements to evaluate teaching and learning in PSHE are robust
- improve the quality of the learning environment in the classrooms used to teach 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