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Mr J Hickman
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Dear Mr Hickman

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 06 February 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 you, the assistant headteacher, the curriculum leader for PSHE, Year11 students and representatives from the school council, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of five lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is satisfactory.

- Students have good knowledge about what is meant by a balanced diet and why some foods should be restricted. However, they do not always apply this knowledge to what they actually eat and drink at lunchtime.
- They understand the importance of exercise in maintaining good health and a high proportion take part in extra-curricular sporting activities.
- Year 9 students are making sensible decisions about their options at key Stage 4, but not all of them understand the difference between vocational and academic pathways.
- Students have satisfactory knowledge and understanding about the effects of drug misuse. Their understanding about the factual aspects of sex education is good, but they have not explored the aspects of relationships in any depth.
- Personal development is satisfactory. Students are friendly and have positive attitudes to PSHE, except when the lessons do not engage their full attention and then there is low level disruption.
- Students often listen well to each other. They have the confidence to express their opinions but they sometimes struggle to find the vocabulary they need.
- Literacy skills demonstrated in PSHE lessons are weak.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teachers generally have good relationships with students and exercise good classroom control and discipline.
- Planning does not always identify clearly the key learning objectives and outcomes for PSHE and how these will be assessed. This results in low expectations and a lack of rigour and pace in a few lessons.
- Much of the teaching observed was teacher directed and dominated. Students had few opportunities to express and explore their own views through structured discussion, drama or role play.
- Many of the teachers lack specialist knowledge in this area, and so the quality of teaching varies too much from class to class.
- Assessment is inadequate because there is no formal tracking of progress in PSHE. There is a small amount of self-assessment but it is low level and superficial.

Quality of the curriculum

The PSHE curriculum is inadequate overall, although there are some good features.

- The specialist sports college status is used well in physical education lessons to convey key messages about healthy lifestyles.
- There are good links with the Connexions services and local colleges.

- The work on the Healthy Schools programme has had a positive impact on forming the ethos of the school. However, it is not linked closely enough to the PSHE curriculum.
- The school council does a good job but does not communicate well enough with the rest of the school and therefore does not provide an experience of active citizenship for all.
- Schemes of work for PSHE are not sufficiently detailed; they lack clear outcomes, reference to differentiation or any assessment methods.
- There is fragmentation between the Year 7 work on the Competency Curriculum and the PSHE curriculum in the rest of the school.
- The PSHE curriculum does not meet the needs of the students in this economically disadvantaged area. There is not enough learning about sex and relationships, alcohol abuse and protective behaviours.

Leadership and management of PSHE

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- You have an accurate view of the provision of PSHE in the school. He is working hard to improve the situation by changing the system from teaching PSHE by form tutors to a specialist team. You have faced barriers of recruitment and staff change in implementing these plans.
- The newly appointed curriculum leader has not yet received any training but is hoping to enrol for the PSHE certificate.
- Training for other staff has only been rudimentary and they have not yet had time to build up specialist knowledge.
- Some monitoring and evaluation of provision has taken place by the subject leader but it is not well informed or sufficiently rigorous.

Subject issue: the contribution made by PSHE to the future economic well-being of students

Students are well prepared for the next stage in their learning.

- Careers education is good.
- Students take on a good range of responsibilities across the school. For example, they sit on interview panels to select new members of staff.
- There is a module on personal finance and the school is part of a virtual Enterprise Academy but the impact of these developments has not yet spread across the curriculum.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

- The school is involved in extended school services and has a multi-agency team on site which focuses on emotional health and well-being. Any students presenting with problems get swift and easy access to specialist services.

- There are several successful intervention strategies running which concentrate on students with low self-esteem and on those who are vulnerable.
- However, students who have difficulty in PSHE lessons, for example, those with poor literacy, do not get support and are expected to manage for themselves.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving teaching by building a specialist team
- ensuring that the curriculum meets the needs of students, and has clear learning objectives and outcomes
- establishing a formal system for tracking students' progress in 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 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