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Ms Stephenson
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Dear Ms Stephenson

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 16-17 January 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 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 yourself, the Deputy Warden, Associate Warden, Healthy Lifestyles mentor, catering manager, Sports Coordinator, ILP mentor, school council and groups of students in Year 9 and 11, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is satisfactory.

- Students' personal development is good. They have positive attitudes to PSHE and appreciate its relevance and enjoy the theme days. Students are polite friendly and thoughtful. They are good listeners and express their views with quiet confidence.
- Students know about the concept of a balanced diet and they have a good understanding of what this means in practice. They understand the need for regular exercise.
- Year 11 have satisfactory knowledge about the effects of drugs and alcohol though they have not had many opportunities to practice resisting peer group pressure.
- Year 9 students know about the effects of alcohol and substance misuse but not in sufficient depth or detail.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- No discrete PSHE lessons were seen, because of the cross curricular nature of the way the subject is taught at present. The overall quality of the lessons which were seen was satisfactory.
- The lessons seen were very teacher directed with little student engagement.
- Relationships and classroom management are good but expectations of what learners could achieve in PSHE are low.
- Lessons lack excitement and challenge, and little effective differentiation was observed.
- Students report they do little active, practical work and would like more role play and practical activities.
- Effective use is made of external speakers on Theme days.
- There is no system in place to track the progress of individual students through the PSHE programmes of study.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The PSHE curriculum is in a state of flux. The school is changing from Theme days to a discrete timetabled lesson once a week taught by a specialist team.
- The programme as it stands is interesting and makes good use of external speakers but it lacks coherence and continuity and it leads to learners' experience being fragmented.
- The role of Healthy Lifestyles mentor has a positive impact through extended schools work, supporting clubs and extra-curricular activities.
- The school has not yet achieved Healthy School status but is working towards this.

- An effective student council is in operation which ensures all students feel they have a voice in how the school is run and provides an experience for all students for active citizenship.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The new Warden and subject co-ordinator have an accurate view of PSHE which is why they wish to change the system and bring about improvement. Lesson observation will be part of the new system.
- Development plans for the subject are good and envisage a move to discrete PSHE education lessons taught by a specialist team of volunteers, supplemented by assemblies and drop down days. Change will occur in September 2008 and school will follow the new programmes of study for personal and economic well being.
- Access to training is good.

Subject issue: Economic well-being

Economic well-being is satisfactory.

- Preparation for future in terms of confidence, interviews and careers education is done well; students feel well prepared to make the transition to sixth form or vocational college placements.
- Excellent work is done with Individual Learning Plans (ILP) from Year 9 onwards; students have individual interviews about their targets and plans for the future.
- The programme of careers education and guidance before Year 9 is weaker.
- Personal finance and economic understanding has not yet been developed across the curriculum.

Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- Little differentiation was seen in lessons.
- The needs of some groups of students are identified and met, for example, girls with low self-esteem who given extra help.
- Good information is provided by the special needs department for ILP interviews.
- There is good access to the buildings for students with disabilities.
- Students from minority ethnic feel well integrated into PSHE lessons. Students with English as an additional language from white European backgrounds are not always given sufficient help in lessons, and other students interviewed feel unprepared for life in a diverse society.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- achieving Healthy Schools status by strong leadership and pulling together different strands within the school community
- improve the quality of teaching in PSHE by raising expectations of what students are capable of and using more active, experiential methods which fully engage and involve students
- moving ahead with the implementation of curriculum reforms; taking into account the new schemes of work for personal and economic well-being, and ensuring new schemes of work have clear learning objectives, outcomes and means of assessment.

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