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Ms J Samuel
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Samuel

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 Wednesday 23 January 2008 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 you and your deputy, a wide range of other staff and representatives from external agencies, scrutiny of relevant documentation, discussion with four groups of students and observation of three lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be good.

Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Students throughout the school, including the sixth form, have a good knowledge of drugs apart from Year 9, where at this point in the term, the topic has not yet been covered.
- In general, students have more knowledge and understanding of sexual health issues than drugs issues.
- The achievement of vulnerable groups of students in health related issues is good, reflecting their specific needs.
- Students have good opportunities to develop their personal and social skills by leading groups in sport and the arts for example.
- Individual gaps in PSHE knowledge and understanding are filled by students' referral or self-referral to the multi-agency support room staffed by experts.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The overall quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The quality of teaching and learning by external professionals used regularly to teach PSHE is consistently good.
- The multi-agency staff based on site and employed by the school, provide outstanding support for individual pupils. Appropriate resources, including information communication technology are used well, according to need.
- There is no formal assessment or tracking of students' overall achievements in PSHE. Annual reporting to parents does include comments, albeit of variable quality.
- In some class-based lessons delivered by non-specialist staff, learning objectives were insufficiently focused on clear learning outcomes.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good overall. Statutory requirements are met.

- The curriculum delivered by external professionals is good. Their considerable skills and subject knowledge add significant value to the curriculum.
- The quality of the work-related and careers education curriculum is good.
- The curriculum for vulnerable students is also good. Programmes are consistently effective and responsive to individual need.
- Whilst the curriculum is rich, there is currently no overarching scheme of work that maps the progression of skills, knowledge and understanding of PSHE as taught by the specialists and followed up by form tutors.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The quality of leadership and management of PSHE is good.

- The decision to remove the weekly PSHE lesson taught by form tutors, in favour of a high quality curriculum delivered by professionals, many based on site, and followed up by form tutors, has improved the curriculum and the students' skills, knowledge and understanding.
- The committed and able deputy leading on PSHE manages external speakers, theatre groups and other agencies very efficiently.

Subject issue: Economic well-being

The economic well-being of students is good.

- Students are well-prepared for the world of work through a good work-related learning programme, vocational opportunities, community links and other individual support when they leave school.
- Increasing numbers of students are continuing to further education. The number of students who are not in education, employment or training (NEET) when they leave school is reducing.
- The schools' focus on ensuring that students are proficient in English and mathematics when they leave school is preparing them well for the world of work.

Inclusion

Inclusion is good.

There is very effective support for vulnerable students in the school, especially in the multi-agency support base. Large numbers of students are referred or self-refer and receive high quality individual support that relates to their personal, social or health development. As a result, these students achieve well in PSHE, sometimes better than that of their peers, as support is specifically tailored to their need.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- devise a scheme of work that clearly maps the PSHE provision to ensure coverage and ensure progression
- ensure that all PSHE sessions and follow up tutor periods have clear and measurable learning objectives
- devise a system to track students' progress in their personal, social and health development.

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

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector