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Mr J Fuller
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Dear Mr Fuller

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 26 March to look at work in PSHE.

As outlined in our 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 Skills for Life coordinator, groups of Year 9 and Year 11 students and the student council, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons; one work experience job selection process and a Year 9 assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be good with outstanding features.

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement is good.

- Students know how to stay safe in difficult situations and who to go to for help.
- They understand the need to eat a balanced diet and the importance of exercise in keeping fit.
- Students have a good understanding of sex and relationships education and are aware of the dangers of drug abuse, including alcohol and nicotine.
- The personal development of students is outstanding. They are very articulate and confident to express their views clearly.
- They are positive in their attitudes to PSHE and recognise its value to their future lives. They particularly like the more active lessons which involve role-play or independent research. As one Year 11 student said about a lesson she had enjoyed, "instead of just sitting there we used computers and researched it ourselves".
- Students have respectful relationships with adults and each other and this is demonstrated in the peer mentoring schemes which run across the school.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

Teaching and learning are good overall.

- The quality of teaching varies considerably because PSHE is not always taught by the core team of specialist teachers.
- Teachers have good classroom management skills and act as effective role models for students.
- Lessons have a dynamic sense of pace and purpose.
- Questioning techniques are used effectively and there is good use of resources, especially information and communication technology (ICT).
- However, some teachers do not engage students actively in their learning and there is little planning for different levels of ability.
- A good range of assessment opportunities is provided for PSHE including end of unit tests and certificates for the Trident Gold awards.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good.

- Careers education and guidance is outstanding and enables students to see the relevance of their education and become more motivated.
- The school council is very active and provides a valuable experience of active citizenship. Students spoken to felt they had a real voice in the running of the school.
- The Healthy School Award has had a positive impact especially on healthy eating.
- Physical education and extra-curricular sporting activities make an excellent contribution to PSHE by giving students opportunities to apply

what they have learnt. Ninety per cent of students take part in extra-curricular activities.

- Specialist language college status has been used to a limited extent in introducing students to different cultures.
- Schemes of work are in place, and work has been started to put in place the new programmes of study for personal and economic well-being in September.
- The time allocation for PSHE and citizenship at Key Stage 3 and in Year 11 is very tight, and leads to fragmentation and lack of continuity.

Leadership and management of PSHE

Leadership and management are good.

- The PSHE coordinator works hard to support PSHE teachers but is hampered by the lack of a stable, specialist team.
- Statutory requirements are met, and assessment procedures are managed well.
- Some monitoring and evaluation does take place but there has been little systematic lesson observation.
- The views of students are taken into account and the programmes of study are adapted to meet their needs.

Subject issue: preparation for economic well-being

Students feel very well prepared for the next stage of education or training.

- Extensive careers education and effective use of the Connexions service prepare students well to make decisions about their futures and improves their motivation.
- Work experience for all students in Year 11 gives students a valuable opportunity to test out their skills in the world of work.
- Theme days enable students to participate in a wide variety of enterprise activities, such as The Real Game and Young Enterprise.

Inclusion

Inclusion in PSHE is satisfactory.

- Evidence was seen in one lesson of some very effective support for a student with learning difficulties by a Learning Support Assistant. However, little planning for different levels of abilities was seen in central planning for PSHE.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds appear well integrated and achieve well, and students said they felt well prepared for life in a diverse society.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the consistency of teaching by ensuring there is a stable, trained team of teachers for PSHE
- allocating more discrete timetabled time for PSHE at Key Stage 3 and in Year 11.

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