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Mrs S Lawrence
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Lawrence

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 and 07 March 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 should we wish to cite specific aspects of practice we will contact the school first. 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 and members of your senior leadership team, the PSHE co-ordinator, the co-ordinator for enterprise, specialist guidance teachers, and pupils from Years 7-11, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of lessons and an assembly.

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

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Students' personal development is outstanding
- Students are aware of how to stay healthy through a good knowledge of the risks associated with smoking, drinks and drugs.
- They are aware of the risks associated with unprotected sex and the responsibilities inherent in a relationship.
- Students have a good knowledge of healthy eating, they are aware of the need for a balanced diet and the implications of eating unhealthily
- Students are given the opportunity to take on a range of responsibilities and act as good citizens within the school and wider community.
- There is a good understanding of the role of a responsible citizen and the structures that support this within our society.
- Behaviour in lessons is good, pupils listen attentively and discuss issues in a mature and thoughtful way.
- Students communicate confidently both individually and within groups, while being prepared to listen to the views of others.
- The majority of students are actively involved in the extensive extra curricular provision, and willingly take on responsibilities.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is good with some outstanding features.

- The teachers observed had excellent subject knowledge and were confident with the subject matter they were delivering.
- The lessons were well structured, had good pace and dealt with challenging information.
- Lack of time meant that there were few opportunities in the lessons observed to recap or assess the impact of the information provided on pupils learning.
- The lessons involved a range of activities, including paired and group discussions; teacher directed questioning and pupil presentation.
- A variety of different resources were used and in one lesson Information Communication Technology (ICT) was used very effectively.
- Students are encouraged to be creative, especially in the area of economic well being.
- External speakers are used extensively and to good effect.
- There was little evidence of formal assessment of PSHE work.
- The monitoring of student progress and the impact of the subject on learning lacks sufficient structure.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is good with some outstanding elements.

- The way PSHE and Citizenship are delivered within the curriculum is under review with plans to effect change to specialist teacher delivery and regular timetable slots. This is scheduled to start in September 2009.
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) material is in the process of being integrated into the PSHE and wider curriculum.
- The school has gained the Health Schools Award and this has had a positive impact on the food served by the canteen which offers a variety of nutritious options.
- A well structured Peer Support system provides opportunities for students to take an active role in tackling bullying and racism.
- The school has developed a year and school council structure which effectively consults students on a variety of topics. This is valued by the students who feel that they have an influence on the running of the school, as well as experiencing active citizenship through it.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are outstanding.

- The PSHE co-ordinator is well trained, very committed and enthusiastic.
- The Senior Leadership Team is actively involved in the review and management of PSHE provision. They are aware of current initiatives and proactively seek to implement these into the wider school curriculum. The SEF is detailed and forward looking.
- Performance management of those delivering PSHE and Citizenship is well structured.
- Training has been provided to all staff on the wider aspects of the PSHE curriculum.
- Financial resources have been made available to those who perceive a need for further training in order to deliver the PSHE course. However it is unclear what the uptake of this has been.

Subject issue: How well are students prepared for future economic well-being?

This aspect is outstanding

- The school has Business and Enterprise specialist status and has integrated these elements across the whole curriculum.
- Students are encouraged to run their own businesses. Approximately 300 are involved in this.

- Students spoke very highly of a recent project on Fairtrade which looked at aspects of finance, human rights and responsibilities.
- Economic well being is fully integrated across the school in almost all curricular areas, with many exciting and innovative projects being undertaken.
- There is a well structured careers programme which includes interviews with Connexions advisers and the involvement of local companies to practice interview techniques.

Inclusion

There is evidence of outstanding practice.

- Those experiencing emotional or psychological difficulties can access extensive additional help and support provided by the school working in partnership with a variety of external agencies.
- Students with disabilities receive outstanding support and are fully integrated into the life of the school.
- Although few in number, students from minority ethnic groups are well integrated and achieve success.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing the system for tracking and recording students' progress in PSHE and monitoring the impact of the subject on their development
- ensuring that the findings from the review of PSHE and citizenship are fully implemented.

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

Derek Wiles
Additional Inspector