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08 May 2008

Mr Montagu
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Dear Mr Montagu

Ofsted 2007-08 subject survey inspection programme: Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Business education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 28-29 April to look at work in PSHE and business education.

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 staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons in PSHE and four lessons in business education.

Personal, Social and Health Education

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Students in the sixth form have good levels of knowledge and understanding about how to keep safe and healthy and report that they apply this knowledge in their everyday lives. They have a comprehensive grasp of the options available to them in the next stage of their careers.
- In the main school, students know about the importance of a balanced diet and exercise for keeping healthy. They know about different sorts of bullying and how to resist peer group pressure.

- Personal development in PSHE is outstanding across the school. Students have positive attitudes to PSHE and their behaviour in lessons is excellent. They have well-developed skills of debate and are lively and articulate, but are also willing to listen and empathise with the views of others.
- Students practically demonstrate their social and personal skills by mentoring younger students and raising large amounts of money for charity.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching was difficult to assess because only one of the lessons observed had distinctive PSHE content. The outcomes in terms of students' understanding indicates that teaching is good.

- Teachers actively promote a caring, Catholic ethos and this is apparent in lessons.
- Teachers make effective use of information communication technology (ICT) to involve and engage students.
- Students enjoy the very effective use made of external speakers to enhance the teaching of sex and relationships and drug education.
- Subject knowledge is generally secure but students report variability across tutor groups in the use of teaching methods which allow them to be actively engaged in their work.
- In the PSHE work taught through other subjects, PSHE learning objectives and outcomes are not made sufficiently explicit.
- Assessment is satisfactory. Although PSHE is assessed through specific subjects, for example science and English, there is no formal tracking of progress in PSHE as a whole.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The strong Catholic ethos has a positive impact on the behaviour and attitudes of staff and students and creates a secure learning environment where students feel valued and are confident to express their opinions.
- The achievement of the Healthy Schools award has had a positive impact on healthy eating and exercise. The physical education department has made a major contribution to the learning about healthy lifestyles.
- Provision for PSHE is fragmented. It is taught in a form period once a fortnight, through religious education lessons, across other subjects and in suspended timetable days at the end of term. The result of these arrangements is variability in the teaching of PSHE across tutor groups, and a lack of clear, consistent objectives, outcomes and assessment.

Leadership and management of PSHE

Leadership and management are satisfactory.

- The PSHE coordinator is working hard to provide planning and resources but is carrying temporary responsibility for religious education and is therefore fully stretched.
- Useful mapping and audits have been carried out and some preliminary thinking has taken place about curriculum changes for September 2008.
- The accuracy of self-evaluation is sound. Monitoring and evaluation of provision has taken place but not by those with subject expertise.
- There has been a lack of specialist training for PSHE.
- There is good capacity for further improvement.

Subject issue: preparation for economic well-being

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

- Good careers education and effective use of the Connexions service prepare students well to make decisions about their futures and improve their motivation. The school is well on the way to achieving the Investors in Careers award.
- Work experience for all students in Year 11 gives students a valuable opportunity to test out their skills in the world of work.
- Development days enable students to participate in a variety of enterprise activities, such as The Real Game, but lack clear learning outcomes and assessment.
- Financial capability and economic and business understanding are satisfactory and could be developed further.

Inclusion

Inclusion in PSHE is good.

- The school promptly identifies students with health, social or emotional difficulties and ensures an outstanding level of support for them through multi-agency working, the employment of a community psychiatric nurse, school nurse and school counsellors.
- Students from minority ethnic backgrounds appear well integrated and achieve well in lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring PSHE teaching, wherever it occurs, has clear learning objectives, outcomes and methods of assessment
- seizing the opportunities presented by the curriculum changes in the September 2008 review to give more coherence to the personal, social, health and economic education curriculum.

Business Education

The overall effectiveness of business education was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement on business and economics examination courses is good.

- Results in GCSE business studies in 2007 were below the national average but represented satisfactory achievement when related to students' prior attainment. Results in previous years have been above national averages and students currently in Year 11 are making at least satisfactory progress.
- Achievement and standards in GCE economics have been consistently good over the past three years. Achievement and standards in GCE applied business and BTEC business level 2, both of which have been recently introduced, were satisfactory in 2007. Students currently taking these courses are making good progress. Completion rates are high and a substantial numbers of students go on to take economics and business courses at university.
- Students' personal development in business education is good. Behaviour in the lessons observed was excellent and students have positive attitudes to learning. Students were prepared to ask questions in the lessons observed but sixth form tended to be rather passive. Classroom relationships are excellent and students work very effectively with each other.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teachers are appropriately qualified and demonstrate good subject knowledge.
- Students feel very well supported and find staff accessible and approachable when they encounter difficulties.
- Students enjoy their economics and business lessons and are generally well motivated.
- Teachers deploy an appropriate range of teaching styles but tend to do too much of the work for students, giving them insufficient opportunities to develop their independent learning skills.
- Students receive good feedback on their written work, they know how well they are progressing and what they need to do to improve.
- Effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) for research was seen in one lesson but there is scope for making more effective use of it to enhance teaching and learning, particularly as the department now has good facilities in two of its three teaching rooms.
- Students' files often lack clear organisation and structure, making them less useful than they might be for examination revision.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- There is good provision of examination courses in business and economics, particularly post-16, where students have the opportunity to take a BTEC level 2 course, GCE applied business and GCE economics. The range of courses meet students' needs and contributes to high completion rates. Although only GCSE business studies is offered at Key Stage 4, students have additional opportunities to study aspects of business education through courses in ICT.
- Several useful links with businesses have been developed to help make courses more relevant. Students valued these but would like more opportunities to engage directly with employers, to go on visits and to take part in business competitions.
- The provision for enterprise education for all students, including developing financial capability and economic and business understanding, is satisfactory. The enterprise and work experience weeks are well organised and valued by students. Units of work on personal finance have been introduced in Key Stage 3 and Year 11 students have a day to develop their financial skills in conjunction with a national bank. There are good opportunities for students to develop their enterprise skills through charity work and organising events, such as the Year 11 'prom'. However, this does not yet add up to a coherent curriculum and the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve at each stage of their education have not been identified.

Leadership and management of business education

Leadership and management are good.

- Business and economics courses are well led and managed and useful schemes of work and key policies are in place.
- There is good monitoring of student progress and interventions are made when students are underachieving.
- Business teachers are well supported, including good opportunities for them to undertake professional development.
- The departmental self-evaluation provides an accurate analysis of its main strengths and weaknesses and there is evidence of effective action being taken to remedy any shortcomings identified.
- A member of the business education department leads on enterprise education but has only recently taken up this post. A useful audit of the provision for enterprise education has been carried out but there is no overall evaluation of current provision and students' progress in this area is not monitored.
- Leaders and managers have good capacity to bring about further improvement.

Inclusion

Inclusion in business education is good.

- All students have access to business courses and the range of provision meets their needs. The BTEC level 2 course in the sixth form provides a valuable progression route for students wishing to take the GCE applied business course.
- There is no evidence of significant underachievement by any particular group of students.
- All students are given opportunities to develop their enterprise education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing more opportunities for students to develop independent learning in lessons
- developing the use of ICT to enrich teaching and learning
- helping students structure and organise their files of work more effectively to aid revision for examinations
- developing a more coherent curriculum for enterprise education as part of the new subject of economic well-being and financial capability to be introduced in September 2008
- identifying and assessing the learning outcomes students are expected to achieve through enterprise education as they progress through the school.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE and business education in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority/local Learning and Skills Council 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