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Mr C Clarke
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Clarke

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 with Margaret Jones HMI on 04 June 2008 to look at work in PSHE.

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 discussions with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of PSHE related lessons.

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

Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is good.

- Students' skills, attitudes and personal development are excellent.
- Students value their roles as members of the school community.
- The contribution made by members of the school council and sixth formers to the life and work of the school is significant.
- Students have an excellent understanding of the opportunities available to them and are well prepared for the next stage in their lives.
- They enjoy and value PSHE lessons and related activities.
- Overall, they have good knowledge and understanding about the dangers of smoking, alcohol and drugs, and how to safeguard their well-being, including their sexual health; some topics are not always tackled in enough depth.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is good.

- Learning is underpinned by strong relationships and the positive commitment to the subject by staff and students.
- The teachers and staff are excellent role models.
- Teachers are well supported, including on how to tackle sensitive issues.
- Teachers use a range of strategies in lessons to develop students' social skills well, including questioning and group work.
- Students use 'MOODLE' (the school's virtual learning forum) to share ideas and discuss issues.
- Teachers know the students well and assess their progress effectively.
- Achievement is recognised appropriately such as through governors' commendation and pupil achievement awards.
- Explicit learning objectives are not clearly set out for all lessons.
- Reports to parents do not always clearly identify the progress made by students in the strands of PSHE.

Quality of the curriculum

The PSHE curriculum is good with outstanding features.

- The curriculum is broad and balanced and tackles relevant and topical issues such as Internet safety, different addictions, and, for sixth formers, safe driving and safe gap year travel.
- Teachers are very well supported by the pastoral managers and by external 'experts'.
- The school has introduced several successful initiatives that have had a positive impact on healthy eating, including remodelling its provision in CafeQ, the employment of a qualified chef and the junior chef club.
- The school has gained the Healthy School Award and this has had a positive impact on encouraging healthy lifestyles.
- The extensive range of sporting and other curriculum enrichment activities makes a valuable contribution to PSHE, and a high proportion of students participate.
- Students such as the sixth form 'officials' respond very well to the many responsibilities they are given.
- The school provides excellent additional and personalised support for vulnerable students.
- Students are able to pursue their individual interests through, for example, the successful Duke of Edinburgh and the Junior and Community Sports Leader award schemes.
- Students' knowledge and understanding across all the strands of PSHE is constrained by the time allocated to it, especially in years 7 to 9.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are outstanding.

- The school's evaluation of its provision and what it needs to do to improve is accurate and inspirational.
- Learning in PSHE is very well integrated with provision in other aspects of the personal development curriculum (PDC).
- Effective support is provided to the non-specialist teachers by school managers.
- The monitoring and evaluation of PSHE lessons is developing.
- The new skills-based programme across all years (launched just last month) has been rigorously designed following exhaustive consultation with students and staff.
- School leaders embrace change and secure a high level of commitment to the innovative developments in provision.

Subject issue: careers education and guidance (CEG)/information advice and guidance (IAG)

- Students are very well prepared for further study and the world of work and they receive accurate and impartial information at the key stages of transition.
- Students have good access to a wide range of relevant guidance materials.
- The school has built an effective partnership with the Connexions service.
- Parents are involved at appropriate stages in the programme but do not always receive enough written information.
- The specialist staff are well qualified.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring there are measurable learning objectives for all lessons
- ensuring plans to increase the amount of time allocated to PSHE are fully implemented in September.

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

Henry Moreton
Additional Inspector