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Mr Bradbury
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bradbury

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 05 and 06 June 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 yourself, the pastoral manager, the pupil support manager, the Head of citizenship, the nurture group leader and students from different age groups, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons, observation of a school council meeting and an assembly.

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

Achievement and Standards

Pupils' overall achievement in PSHE is good.

- Pupils' personal development is outstanding. They enjoy their work and are enthusiastic about PSHE; they are confident, articulate and listen very well. Pupils readily express their views; however they are not always audible or clear.
- Pupils have a good understanding of how to keep healthy and they know the meaning of a balanced diet. They have a good understanding of the dangers of tobacco and alcohol. Older pupils have a good knowledge of the changes that occur while growing up and a secure basic understanding of sex and relationships education.
- Older pupils understand what it means to be a good citizen and have a good knowledge of local and national government.
- All pupils are included well in PSHE lessons. Pupils with learning difficulties make good progress in PSHE through effective provision in the nurture group.
- Pupils' written work is high quality, varied in the way it is presented and makes a good contribution to developing pupils' literacy and numeracy.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is good.

- The staff are dynamic, committed and plan their lessons effectively. All adults place an appropriate emphasis on pupils' emotional development.
- Adults provide excellent role models, demonstrating a wide range of social skills.
- Teachers manage pupils' behaviour well, provide interesting and stimulating materials, and lessons move at a brisk pace. Occasionally, teachers are too dominant in lessons and pupils are passive observers.
- Assessment practice is developing with pupils assessing their own work, but there is no formal system in place for teachers to systematically track pupils' progress in PSHE.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good with outstanding features.

- The curriculum is interesting and varied so pupils enjoy learning. The PSHE workshops using external speakers are a strength because they provide stimulating experiences which are integrated well into subsequent lessons.
- Pupils are very well prepared for life in a diverse society through their experiences, such as international school links and visits.

- The programme of emotional literacy is very effective and SEAL (Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning) materials have been judiciously integrated throughout the PSHE curriculum.
- The school has gained the Healthy Schools Award and this has had a positive impact on lunchtime and the range of physical activities available.
- A wide range of extra-curricular activities makes an outstanding contribution to pupils' learning in PSHE because it allows them to put what they know into practice.
- Pupils learn some basic skills in managing their finances, although they do not yet experience wider aspects of business, enterprise and budgeting.
- The school council is lively and active, but the opportunity for pupils to undertake key roles such as chair or treasurer is being missed.

Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are good.

- The co-ordinator is enthusiastic and has provided clear direction to an equally enthusiastic team through an extensive range of high quality planning documents, support for staff and action plans.
- The monitoring of PSHE is good, using a wide range of evaluative tools, involving staff and pupils. The co-ordinator's judgements of lessons are perceptive and accurate.

Subject issue: how well are pupils prepared for future economic well-being?

Pupils are well prepared for adult life.

- Pupils are well prepared for the next stage of their education and are confident about moving on to secondary school.
- Pupils take on a wide range of responsibilities across the school, for example, participation in Fair Trade Week, which helps them prepare for their future economic well-being.
- At present there is too little coverage of careers education and guidance in Year 7, but there are plans to liaise with the Connexions service to remedy this from September.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the assessment of pupils' progress and include teacher assessment in addition to pupil self-assessment
- ensure the areas of careers education and economic well-being are fully covered.

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

Susan Orpin
Additional Inspector