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Ms F Bromley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Bromley

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 11 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 and careers education and guidance.

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 coordinator for PSHE, representatives from the school council and a group of Year 8 pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of three lessons and a Key Stage 3 assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be good.

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement is good.

- Younger pupils know the difference between right and wrong, and are beginning to explore the complexities of moral problems. For example,

in the Year 5 lesson where pupils were asked to decide whether Robin Hood's actions were good or bad.

- Older pupils have good understanding about the physical and social effects of drugs and alcohol abuse.
- Pupils across the school have good understanding of healthy eating and know about the importance of exercise. They have good awareness of the physical changes that occur at puberty.
- Pupils have positive attitudes towards PSHE and enjoy their lessons. They listen well to their teachers and behave well except for a few boys who have difficulty maintaining concentration.
- Self-presentation skills are developing well and pupils can express their opinions confidently and audibly.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups are well integrated and achieve as well as other pupils in PSHE.

Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

Teaching and learning are good.

- Teachers have strong and productive relationships with their classes. They act as excellent role models and manage behaviour well.
- Lessons are well planned and involve and engage pupils in their learning, for example through debate, games and role play.
- Teaching and learning are limited to some extent by the lack of time allocated to PSHE and occasionally by the lack of specialist knowledge.
- A satisfactory start has been made to the process of assessment with pupils completing self-assessment after three modules of work. At present there is little tracking by teachers of the progress pupils make in PSHE.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- The PSHE curriculum has some very good features but is satisfactory overall because too little time is allocated to teaching discrete PSHE and the PSHE lesson takes place on Friday afternoon.
- Schemes of work for PSHE are detailed and carefully planned.
- The needs of vulnerable pupils are identified and met through small group work and anger management sessions.
- The achievement of the Healthy School Award has had a positive impact in focusing and refining PSHE lessons and improving lunchtimes and playtimes.
- The school council provides a valuable opportunity of active citizenship for all, and ensures that pupils feel their opinions are listened to.
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) materials are being introduced judiciously to enhance the quality of teaching.
- External speakers, including the school nurse, are used effectively to deepen learning and are much appreciated by pupils.

Leadership and management of PSHE

Leadership and management are good with outstanding features.

- The school improvement plan is based around the Every Child Matters agenda and gives prominence to PSHE.
- The PSHE coordinator is dedicated and enthusiastic. She has worked extremely hard and effectively to produce schemes of work and training which support tutors well in their teaching of PSHE, and to coordinate the work on Healthy Schools.
- The PSHE coordinator has written an accurate and comprehensive self-evaluation for PSHE. This has resulted in an action plan for the subject which points the way forward to further improvement.
- At the present time there is no formal monitoring of PSHE lessons and as a result the quality of teaching varies across tutor groups.

Subject issue: preparation for economic well-being and careers education

Pupils are satisfactorily prepared for their future economic well-being.

- There is a good careers education programme in Year 8, which includes motivational visits to the local college and pupils building a portfolio of their skills and qualities. However, there is little careers education in Year 7.
- Pupils take on many roles around school, such as raising money for charity, which enable them to take responsibility and use their initiative.
- Pupils do some work on managing personal finances and developing skills for enterprise but these aspects could be developed further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- adjusting the timing and the length of the discrete PSHE lesson
- assessing and recording the progress pupils make in PSHE
- introducing more work on careers education and personal finance, especially in Year 7.

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