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Mr D Grigg
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Dear Mr Grigg

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 December 2008 to look at work in PSHEE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on economic well-being and information, advice and guidance (IAG).

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, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHEE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good.

- Students make excellent progress in their personal development because of the school's pastoral structure which contributes significantly to the development of their positive attitudes and values.
- Students' knowledge, understanding and awareness of the issues around sex and drugs are good as a result of the thorough provision from Year 7 through to Year 13.

- Students know how to stay safe and healthy. For example, they value the 'expert' sessions on issues such as 'e-safety', the quality of the food on offer and their easy access to the on-site health unit.
- They are encouraged to take an active part in school life. For example, as prefects, peer mentors and members of the house and school councils.
- Students' confidence is developed well because of their participation in the many enrichment and extra-curricular activities. For example, as one boy said: '...you would never know this wasn't a specialist sports college'.
- As a result of their good achievement and high aspirations most students progress to university on completion of their sixth form studies.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHEE

The quality of teaching is good.

- The small team of specialist teachers are well qualified and use their expertise well.
- In the four lessons seen, students were attentive and well behaved. The lower attaining boys, in particular, were confident speakers and effective listeners because of the very positive relationships established by the teacher.
- Teachers know students well but their formal assessment of the subject is not systematic and is not built into units of work.
- Very effective use is made of the house tutors and learning mentors to ensure that each student is well known and supported. This is underpinned by the very effective house system which is rightly highly regarded by students and staff.
- The school provides excellent support to students when they have specific needs.

Quality of the curriculum

The PSHEE curriculum is good.

- Students have good access to 'expert' advice through the school's effective use of visitors.
- The schools 'arts' specialism enables students of all abilities to develop their self-esteem through a wide range of performing arts activities.
- Teachers are selective in their developing use of the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) materials.
- The school has achieved 'Artsmark Silver' and 'Healthy School' awards.

Leadership and management of PSHEE

Leadership and management are good.

- The procedures for quality assurance are good, and include observation of learning.

- School self-evaluation is accurate and self-critical. Managers have a secure understanding of the school's strengths in its provision in PSHEE as well as the areas needing improvement.
- School managers have put in place good strategies to look after the personal and social needs of students. For example, a transition teacher who also works in the main feeder primary schools, and by arranging for the more vulnerable students in Year 7 to spend more time with the same teacher.

Subject issue: economic well-being and IAG

Provision is outstanding.

- Students have very good access to impartial advice and guidance through effective links with the Connexions service.
- School managers have a very good understanding of the needs of students and as a result provide them with an extensive range of vocational as well as academic subjects from which to choose.
- The development of students' work related skills is excellent. The school's 'applied learning' specialism enables the school to offer practical vocational courses to many students, especially in years 10 and 11.
- The advice and guidance programme for sixth formers is excellent.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that all the strands of PSHEE are assessed.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHEE 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

Henry Moreton
Additional Inspector