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05 March 2009

Mrs C Kelly
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Dear Mrs Kelly

Ofsted survey inspection programme: personal, social, health and economic education (PSHEE) and information and communication technology (ICT)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during the visit on 28 and 29 January 2009 with Sue Orpin Additional Inspector, which looked at work in PSHEE and ICT. As outlined in the initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subjects, the visit had a particular focus on economic well being and information, advice and guidance for PSHEE and on assessment for ICT.

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, lesson observations as well as the observation an assembly and a visit to the Rock Challenge after school club.

PSHEE

The overall effectiveness of PSHEE education was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Students' overall achievement in PSHEE is satisfactory.

- Students' personal development is satisfactory and improving.
- Students generally listen to others in a sound way. When given the opportunity, they express their opinions and some are highly reflective and perceptive.

- Some students lack confidence in themselves and are too passive in their learning.
- Students' skills, such as discussion, teamwork, strategies for resisting peer group influence are under developed.
- Students understand the need for five fruit and vegetables daily, but some are confused about the meaning of a balanced diet. Most understand the need for regular exercise.
- Older students have a good knowledge of sexually transmitted infections, although their understanding of sexual relationships is less well developed.
- Students have a sound knowledge of drugs, including tobacco and alcohol, and their harmful effects.
- Students have a good knowledge of bullying, why it is wrong and the different forms it can take.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHEE

The quality of PSHEE teaching is satisfactory.

- The current team of teachers are confident and have good subject knowledge.
- Teachers have positive and productive relationships with students, and they manage them well.
- Teachers plan some interesting activities, such as creating a collage to help students consider and evaluate media stereotypes of teenagers. However, there are missed opportunities for making full use of the tasks, for example, using questions about the collage to elicit students' ideas, rather than a more limited question and answer session that is more dependent on the teacher's views.
- Although teachers include active and practical opportunities for learning in some lessons, there are too many long periods when some students become passive, making little contribution to their lessons.
- Assessment is very limited, so students have little information about how to improve. There is also little information to indicate how well students are progressing.

Quality of the curriculum

The PSHEE curriculum is satisfactory.

- The school's progress towards the Healthy School's Award is having a positive impact on students and their lifestyle choices in school.
- The curriculum is enriched well in a range of ways, including good use of visitors, such as Aim Higher and an assembly on knife crime led by a police officer. There are effective partnerships with other agencies, such as Connexions and the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children (NSPCC). There are also extra-curricular activities, for example, Rock Challenge, where students make significant gains in self-confidence through developing their expertise in dance.
- The new scheme of work is well written and provides an appropriate emphasis on emotional literacy and healthy lifestyles.

- There have been too few opportunities for students to develop their skills in a progressive way, although this is being addressed through the new scheme of work.
- Vulnerable students are identified and targeted with additional opportunities for information, advice and guidance.
- Students do not have enough opportunities to use ICT in PSHEE.
- The Bullying Intervention Group (a student run organisation, which has been supported by NSPCC) is making a good contribution to helping students feel safe at school.

Leadership and management of PSHEE

The leadership and management of PSHEE are satisfactory.

- The recently appointed leader is enthusiastic and has successfully contributed to improvements.
- The management decision to deploy a team of suitably skilled teachers has already contributed to progress in the subject.
- The co-ordinator is well supported by a member of the senior leadership team and there is a clear understanding about how to improve, including the specific training needed.
- There is little monitoring of the subject and there have been too few lesson observations.
- Policies for sex and relationship education as well as drug education, have not been recently reviewed and are out of date.

Subject issue: economic well being and information, advice and guidance

Students are prepared for adult life in a satisfactory way.

- Students begin to explore the world of work from Year 7 through PSHEE lessons, although these experiences are not embedded across other subjects.
- There is a good partnership with Connexions that enables students to have specific help and advice when making career choices.
- There is good provision to improve students' financial capability from Year 7.
- The teaching of careers education is uneven and not all staff are sufficiently well trained.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing more assessment tasks for PSHEE
- monitoring teaching to improve its consistency and ensure all students are actively engaged throughout lessons
- ensuring that students' skills are developed in a progressive way, including the use of ICT.

ICT

The overall effectiveness of ICT was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards in ICT

Achievement is satisfactory and standards are broadly in line with national averages.

- Standards are rising and have improved significantly from having been significantly below average in previous years.
- Students make more rapid progress at Key Stage 4 than at Key Stage 3.
- There is insufficient challenge particularly at Key Stage 3, for the more able students; consequently, too few students attain the higher levels.
- You are now setting challenging targets, but students are not sufficiently involved in the setting and reviewing of their targets.
- Most students are learning to become independent users of ICT for example, for project work, homework and in the use of ICT as a tool to support their learning in other subjects. This is enhanced well by the school's virtual learning environment (VLE), which enables students to access schoolwork and lesson notes from home.
- There are pockets of very good practice in the use of ICT as a learning tool in other subjects. This is helping to raise standards particularly in English, mathematics, science, music, geography and physical education.
- ICT contributes satisfactorily to the school's inclusion policy. The use of ICT as a learning tool engages and motivates students who previously displayed poor attitudes to learning. This is particularly noticeable with some of the low ability boys, who engage more enthusiastically in activities, which include ICT especially when there is a need for them to read and write.

Quality of teaching and learning of ICT

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Although staff in the ICT department demonstrate good subject knowledge, their knowledge of different teaching and learning approaches is less well developed. This is reducing their ability to meet the different needs of all students on a day-to-day basis.
- There are, at times, insufficient strategies to ensure that all students succeed and participate as fully as they might during lessons.
- Teachers make satisfactory use of interactive whiteboards to help students to review their work and build on previous learning.
- Students respond well to the use of ICT as a learning tool and say that it helps to make learning easier, more enjoyable and enables them to develop new skills with ease.
- In some lessons, teaching and learning are more focused on the activities than the skills and capabilities being taught or reinforced. This

reduces the progress students make and limits their understanding of the skills and capabilities they are developing.

- Students are encouraged to become independent users of ICT. Consequently, they make choices about suitable applications to support their work. However, some students struggle to talk about their work using the correct terminology. This is largely due to a lack of emphasis during lessons on the use of technical vocabulary.
- There are good opportunities for students to be creative. A good example is in Year 9, where students learn to create their own video clips about recent items of news. When undertaking this work, students make choices about style, colour, fonts and background; they add animation and music and take account of the impact of filming from different angles.
- Planning for ICT is very variable. Where it is most helpful, it identifies different expectations and learning intentions for students of different abilities. However, at times planning does not take sufficient account of relevant learning targets within the individual educational plans of those students known to have learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Teaching across the school, is making better use of ICT, than has been the case in previous years. However, the extent to which this takes place within and between departments is very variable. As a result, students within the same year group, do not all receive the same opportunities in some subjects to apply their ICT skills.

Quality of the curriculum for ICT

The quality of the curriculum, although improving, is inadequate.

- Changes to the quality and range of provision provide students with programmes of work that are more appropriate to their needs and interests than has been the case in previous years.
- Aspects of the curriculum which are covered particularly well include finding things out, making choices, working creatively and independently and using ICT to solve real life problems.
- However, the discrete ICT curriculum does not cover the National Curriculum requirements in full. Consequently, students are not developing sufficient knowledge and skills about programming, control or the use of data logging. The subject leader recognises these shortcomings, and plans have recently been put in place to rectify this situation.
- The school makes particularly good use of its VLE to support and enhance the curriculum and ensure equality of access to the curriculum for vulnerable groups. However, the application of ICT has yet to become firmly embedded in all departments.
- Most students have a satisfactory understanding of how to keep themselves safe when using technology. However, the school does not have a dedicated unit of work to cover this aspect of the curriculum, and there are no formal mechanisms in place to enable the school to evaluate the effectiveness of provision concerning internet safety.

- The specialist status for performing arts provides additional opportunities for students to use ICT in different and purposeful contexts.

Leadership and management of ICT

The leadership and management of ICT are satisfactory overall.

- There has been a lot of effective work, in last two years, to improve from a very low starting point. The head of department is developing his role effectively and is well supported by senior management and the learning technology coach. This is making a significant contribution to raising the profile of ICT in the school.
- The head of department has an accurate view of the strengths and weakness within the department.
- The leadership and management of the subject have had a positive impact on making the curriculum more enjoyable and relevant to the needs of students and in improving the quality of teaching. This in turn is leading to improved learning and rising standards.
- However, management documentation for the department does not focus sharply enough on progress and standards or the intended outcomes for learners.
- The department provides staff with good continual professional development and this has helped to increase levels of staff confidence and competence in their use of ICT
- There is a draft vision for ICT, but this has yet to be shared with staff and students or be ratified by the governing body.
- The school is well resourced, there is good technical support and the ICT department ensures that hardware and software are fit for purpose.
- There is a good sustainability plan, which is reviewed and updated on a regular basis.

Use of Assessment

The use of assessment in ICT is satisfactory.

- Students' attainment in ICT on entry to Year 7 is not assessed by the school. This reduces teachers' ability to ensure there is sufficient challenge for the most able students.
- The way the school tracks and monitors students' progress is improving. However, data is still not analysed rigorously enough and is not used sufficiently well to compare the performance of different groups of learners.
- The extent to which assessment data are used to inform planning and teaching is too variable.
- Students are encouraged to evaluate the quality of their work and consider how it could be improved; they are also developing their ability of undertaking peer assessments, through the use of a 'test buddy'.

- The school is developing its strategy for evaluating the impact of ICT on teaching and learning across all departments.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure there is sufficient challenge for the more able students particularly at Key Stage 3, so that more students achieve higher levels
- ensure teaching is consistently good and that it takes more account of evaluations and assessment data to better meet the different needs of all students
- improve the quality of management documentation to ensure there is a greater focus on progress, standards and the performance of different groups of learners
- continue to develop the curriculum to ensure provision takes full account of the National Curriculum requirements, particularly in relation to programming, control and data logging.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHEE and ICT in the school.

As explained in the 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

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector