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Mr Sandeman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Sandeman

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 05 November 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: interviews with you, the vice-chair of governors, the deputy head teachers, the head of sixth form, the subject leader for life skills, the careers co-ordinator, heads of year and students from Year 10, Year 12 and Year 13 and representatives from the student council, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHEE was judged to be good.

Achievement

Achievement is good.

- Personal development is outstanding. Students are polite, mature and thoughtful. They are confident to express their own opinions and are very articulate.
- They have positive attitudes towards their life skills course and see the relevance of what they are learning.

- Students have good knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves safe and healthy. They have a high level of awareness of the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse.
- Students understand the options that are available to them when they leave school and have good knowledge of the world of work. Economic understanding is less well developed.
- Older students are developing a good awareness of social issues, such as homelessness.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHEE

Teaching is good.

- Teachers create a safe and secure learning environment for PSHEE, where students behave very well, treat their teachers with respect and feel that their opinions are valued.
- Teachers have good knowledge of the subject content because they are in specialist teams and have had the opportunity to develop expertise.
- Occasionally teachers take over the lesson too much and students become passive.
- There is some evaluation of how students have enjoyed the session and what their future needs may be, but no formal tracking of the progress students make in PSHEE.
- External speakers, such as the school nurse, the Connexions service and representatives from a local hostel for the homeless, are used well to engage students in their learning.
- There is an excellent level of care for vulnerable students. The work set generally matches the ability of the students and students with particular difficulties are identified early and given extra support and counselling.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum is good overall, apart from one aspect which is satisfactory.

- The College has reviewed its PSHEE curriculum to ensure it is responsive to the new reforms, the expressed wishes of students and the needs of the local area.
- The student council works well and gives students an experience of active citizenship.
- The achievement of Healthy Schools status has had a positive impact on the PSHEE curriculum, raising the profile of healthy eating and student involvement.
- A wide range of sporting activities contribute well to PSHEE by giving students opportunities to put what they have learnt about keeping fit into practice.
- There are strong programmes for personal and professional development in the sixth form which are much appreciated by students.
- However, the College has planned PSHEE, careers education and citizenship all to be taught within the life skills programme of one

lesson a fortnight. Even though this time is supplemented well by themed days, it is still insufficient to cover all aspects of these subjects, particularly citizenship.

Leadership and management of PSHEE

Leadership and management are good.

- Leadership for PSHEE and careers work is strong and the leaders are dedicated and extremely well qualified for their roles. They are well supported by senior management.
- Useful documentation including action plans are in place.
- Self-evaluation of the effectiveness of the quality of provision for PSHEE is accurate.
- Some informal monitoring of lessons takes place but there is no current evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning. However, the College has plans to introduce the systematic evaluation of teaching and learning for all subjects including PSHEE.

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

Provision is good.

- Sixth form students are very well-prepared for the next step in their education or into employment. The number of students not in employment, education or work is very low.
- There is an interesting planned programme of careers education and guidance taught through the life skills course. Students complete progress files and individual learning plans and have many opportunities to practise job application and interview skills. However, too little time is allocated for younger students to develop economic and business understanding.
- The good links with the Connexions service and access to a wide range of careers software ensure that students receive impartial careers advice.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending the time available for the teaching of the new personal and economic well-being programmes of study
- developing a system for tracking the progress of students in PSHEE.

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

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector