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Mr R Wilkin
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Dear Mr Wilkin

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 08 and 09 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: interviews with you, the deputy head, the head of humanities, a Connexions adviser, the school nurse, a secondary support service representative, link teachers for Young Enterprise, representatives from the school senate and group of students from Years 9 and 10, scrutiny of relevant documentation, and observation of six lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHEE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement

Achievement in PSHEE is good.

- Personal development is outstanding. Students respond well to the Christian ethos of the school which promotes thoughtfulness and mature reflection. They listen carefully to their teachers and each other and express their own views clearly because they know their opinions are valued.

- Students are tolerant and supportive to each other. They demonstrate excellent social skills and are polite and friendly.
- Students have good knowledge and understanding about healthy lifestyles. They know which foods to eat and which to restrict, and most say they make some attempt to put this into practice. They are aware of the importance of exercise and most participate in extra-curricular sporting activities. Older students have good understanding of how to maintain mental health.
- Their knowledge about the dangers of drug and alcohol abuse is sound, and they have practised techniques for resisting peer group pressure.
- Students are aware of the changes that occur during puberty but have more limited knowledge of contraception and sexually transmitted infections and how these can be prevented.
- They have good knowledge of different forms of bullying and how to keep themselves safe from these. They understand why racist and homophobic bullying should not be tolerated.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHEE

Teaching is satisfactory overall.

- Teachers provide a safe, secure and supportive environment for PSHEE and act as excellent role models in terms of their commitment and sense of mission.
- However, because of the nature of the curriculum the PSHEE content in lessons often lacks clear objectives and is not distinct from citizenship objectives.
- Teachers are not always confident in their subject knowledge.
- Very good use is made of external speakers and visitors as a source of specialist expertise.
- Teaching assistants are effective in supporting students with learning difficulties but in many of the lesson plans there was little effective provision for different levels of ability.
- Although questionnaires for parents and students are used to evaluate provision there is no systematic tracking of the progress students are making in PSHEE.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum for PSHEE is satisfactory.

- PSHE education is fragmented across several areas and has a lower profile than religious education and citizenship which are both examination subjects.
- Conference days which supplement the PSHEE curriculum are well planned and enjoyed but students cannot easily identify what they have learnt on these days. They do not provide continuity or a progressive programme of PSHEE.

- The school makes effective use of the School Health Education Unit surveys and uses them to adapt the curriculum and respond to students' need.
- The school has achieved Healthy Schools status and this has had long term impact on knowledge and understanding about healthy lifestyles.
- The school senate is active and students feel they make a genuine contribution to running the school.
- A wide range of enrichment activities such as sports, the Duke of Edinburgh's Award and the eco committee give students the opportunity to consolidate their PSHEE learning.
- Students who are particularly vulnerable are identified promptly and given extra help from the student support service to develop their social skills.

Leadership and management of PSHEE

Leadership and management of PSHEE are satisfactory

- PSHEE, citizenship, religious education and careers education and guidance are managed and co-ordinated by a deputy headteacher and the director of specialism which ensures these subjects maintain a high profile within the school. However, at the moment there is no PSHEE coordinator and PSHEE is acknowledged to be a lower priority.
- The impact of work is monitored principally by the use of the Health Related Behaviour Questionnaire, but there is no lesson observation to evaluate the quality of lessons in PSHEE.
- Although staff have received training for careers education, there has been little staff training specifically for PSHEE.

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

This area is outstanding.

- Older students have good enterprise skills and know how to organise events to maximise sales, and most students have good understanding of economic concepts and institutions.
- Students take part in a wide range of activities which involve them using their initiative and taking responsibility.
- Careers education and information, advice and guidance (IAG) are outstanding and they are embedded across the curriculum. For example, in Year 7 students have a distinct lesson to introduce them to the careers library and resources.
- Students are very well prepared for the next stage in their lives and, as a result, at the end of Year 11, there are no students who are not in education, employment or training.
- The school's partnership with the Connexions service is excellent and benefits the students greatly.
- The work on personal finance is not as well developed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure the distinct elements of PSHEE are identified and taught across the school
- allocate clear responsibility for PSHEE to a member of staff who can act as a champion for the subject and raise its profile
- improve access to training for PSHEE related elements of the curriculum.

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