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Mrs S Abbott
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Dear Mrs Abbott

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 25 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: 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

Achievement is good.

- Students have positive attitudes towards PSHEE and particularly enjoy the visiting experts who are brought in to deliver some activities.
- Students' knowledge, understanding and awareness of the issues around sex and drugs are good.
- Students know how to stay fit and healthy.

- The school ensures that good support is provided for students with learning difficulties and disabilities so that they fully participate in all PSHEE activities.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHEE

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- In the four lessons seen, students of all abilities were attentive and very well behaved.
- Subject teachers address PSHEE issues in lessons. For example, GCSE English students develop an excellent awareness of relationships while studying John Steinbeck's 'Of Mice and Men'.
- Teachers' lesson planning routinely address enterprise activities and students' economic well-being.
- Although students' progress is assessed, it is not systematic across all the strands of PSHEE, and as students move through the school.
- The support and guidance provided to students is focussed and responds to specific needs.
- The needs of vulnerable girls are very well provided for through the weekly girls' group.

Quality of the curriculum

The PSHEE curriculum is good.

- It is responsive to the need of students and takes their views into account.
- Students' social skills are well developed through a rich extra-curricular programme, especially in community-based drama.
- Students are asked what they think about PSHEE activities and changes are made in response.
- Visitors are used well. The termly personal development days for all students complement the PSHEE curriculum very well.
- Outside lesson time, the team of non-teaching Heads of Year and teaching assistants support students very effectively.
- Students have good access to expert advice such as the school counsellor.
- Some students are 'buddied' with peers who are good role models. Others benefit from work to develop their personal skills in communication.

Leadership and management of PSHEE

Leadership and management are good.

- School leaders are determinedly pursuing their drive to improve provision in PSHEE. Following detailed consultation they have set out a clear vision for PSHEE within the personal development curriculum.
- Provision is enhanced through very good links with the local community and a range of visiting professionals.
- The contributions made by subjects are well documented.

- Self-evaluation of current provision in PSHEE is broadly accurate.

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

- Students have good access to impartial advice and guidance through the effective links with the Connexions service.
- Students have a good understanding of the opportunities available to them after they leave school, and are well prepared.
- As a result of the school's specialism, students are able to gain good experiences in arts related vocational areas.
- Students gain good work related experience in hairdressing and plumbing in the newly established skills centre.
- Students are given good advice about how to manage their personal finances.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that all strands of PSHEE are assessed, recorded and reported to parents.

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