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Mrs Hunter  
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Dear Mrs Hunter

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Personal, Social and Health Education (PSHE) and Design and Technology (D&T)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 18-20 March 2009 to look at work in PSHE education and design and technology.

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 staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

#### PSHE

As outlined in our initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on:

- how the PSHE curriculum meets the specific needs of students in your local area, and how progress is tracked and assessed; and
- the contribution made by PSHE to the future economic well-being of your students.

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

#### Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- Students make good progress in developing their personal skills. Behaviour in lessons is good and students are friendly and polite. They

enjoy and value their work in PSHE. They work well in groups and are developing self-confidence and presentation skills.

- Sixth formers are mature and responsible. They are acquiring the independent living skills they will need for the next stage of their education or work.
- Students have basic knowledge and understanding about what is meant by a balanced diet. They know they should eat fruit and vegetables, and which foods should be restricted but they do not always understand why. They are not fully aware of dangers of alcohol in making themselves vulnerable
- They know why exercise is important and most participate in the wide range of activities provided by the school.
- They know how to keep themselves safe particularly with regard to road safety.
- Students know about some of the different kinds of bullying but are not aware of homophobic and sexist bullying.
- Older students know about sexually transmitted infections and contraception and know where to go for help and advice.
- Knowledge and understanding, particularly of drug education, is superficial due to fragmented nature of teaching. Students have limited understanding of how to maintain mental and emotional health.

### Quality of teaching and learning of PSHE

The quality of PSHE teaching is satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationships with students; they exert strong discipline and have effective classroom management skills.
- Effective use is made of external agencies on off time-table days.
- The tutors who teach PSHE education are not always confident in their subject knowledge because they lack specialist training. As a result, expectations are too low, resources are not used effectively and students are not always actively engaged in their learning.
- There are strong elements of care for students. All students felt there was an adult in whom they could confide if they had a problem.
- There is little systematic tracking of the progress students are making in PSHE education.

### Quality of the PSHE curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory overall.

- There are several strong features of the curriculum which make a valuable contribution to PSHE education. These include the Healthy Schools Award which has had a positive impact in improving the quality of school meals and increasing the emphasis on physical activity, leading to the award of Sportsmark Gold, first aid across the school, a very successful sixth form mentoring scheme and the work of an active school council.
- However, PSHE education is taught by assemblies and in tutor time, through other subjects in the curriculum and in off timetable events

once a year. These arrangements make continuity and depth of learning difficult to achieve.

- Although the PSHE curriculum has been audited and mapped thoroughly, there are no schemes of work in place.
- Vulnerable students are identified promptly and those who need extra support spend time in the learning support unit called the Bridge and receive outstanding individual help to develop their social skills.

## Leadership and management of PSHE

The leadership and management of PSHE are good overall.

- The coordinator has worked hard to improve provision in the subject and had led the Healthy School development and organises the off timetable days efficiently.
- However, tutors are not given sufficient, specific support and training to teach PSHE and although monitoring of lessons has taken place it is not sufficiently robust.
- The head of the sixth form manages the PSHE education well for sixth formers and provides very good levels of personal support and guidance.
- The coordination of enterprise, work related learning and careers education and guidance is good and provides a very effective programme to equip students for their futures.

## Subject issue: preparation for future economic well-being

Preparation for economic well-being is good.

- As a result of an outstanding partnership with the service for careers advice and information, students are well prepared for adult life and feel they have been given useful and impartial advice.
- Students from Year 7 onwards begin to explore the world of work through the Real Game, enterprise activities, computer software and work experience.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the quality of PSHE teaching by giving tutors more support, training and resources
- writing specific schemes of work for PSHE education
- assessing the progress students are making in PSHE education.

## Design and Technology (D&T)

As outlined in our initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on: the extent to which inequality and stereotyping are tackled in D&T.

The overall effectiveness of D&T is good.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good.

- From their starting points in Year 7 students make satisfactory progress during Key Stage 3 to develop their practical skills and in so doing gain good knowledge of the working characteristics and properties of the materials they use. However their progress slows in developing skills to critically analyse products, to evaluate and to plan.
- A high proportion of students chose to continue to study D&T to examination level. Procedures to track students' progress are very effective in enabling staff to quickly identify and support students who begin to fall behind in managing their coursework and take action to secure improvement. Students reach standards that are well above average and a significant proportion gain A\* and A grades. In 2008, Year 11 students made good progress given their attainment on entry to the school. Students who continue to study D&T to advanced level perform well and some sixth form students produce work to a high standard and of professional quality.
- D&T makes a very good contribution to students' personal development and well-being. Students act responsibly and safely in lessons. They work independently and with increasing confidence and enjoy the challenge of designing and making original products. By the end of Year 9 most students are confident in being able to cook healthy meals.

### Quality of teaching and learning of D&T

The quality of teaching and learning is good with outstanding features.

- Relationships between students and staff are excellent. Students respect the high quality specialist advice and guidance they receive from teachers and technicians. Consequently some students develop technical skills, for example in food technology, to a high level.
- Teachers plan work effectively at Key Stage 4 and at advanced level to enable students to increasingly work independently to monitor their own learning and progress and to take responsibility for setting their own targets. Teachers' excellent specialist subject knowledge underpins much good practice: for example students record their work as it develops using mobile phones and digital cameras, and planning diaries help students to work out what they need to do next. Key Stage 3 learning is most effective when teachers structure lessons to enable students to learn in groups to research and pool the information they collect. Where students are taught specific techniques to enable them to plan and evaluate their

work, for example when designing and making mobile phones in Year 9, they make rapid progress. However this good practice is not consistent at Key Stage 3.

- Students use computer applications satisfactorily. Resources for computer aided manufacture are limited and require updating to enable all students to meet increasing expectations for technical precision and to exploit the creative use of such technology.

### Quality of the D&T curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Provision meets requirements and all students have an entitlement to cook during Years 7 to 9. The Key Stage 3 curriculum is well structured to provide a good balance of practical and theoretical work whilst providing a sound technical base for students to progress to specialist courses. Practical skills in using wood are well taught but at the expense of a wider range of resistant and modern materials and this has an impact on the materials students choose to use in later years.
- Courses in Years 10 to 13 meet students' expectations and are very well suited to their needs and interests. Students make good use of after school activities and enrichment opportunities to complete their coursework and to learn about industrial manufacture.
- Students are increasingly aware of sustainability issues and are becoming more critically aware of creative and innovative products. They are challenged effectively to experiment and try new things in food technology.

### Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of the subject are good.

- Senior leaders are supportive of D&T and have an accurate view of the department's strengths. This is used effectively to promote developments in D&T. Further attention to monitoring health and safety and action to reduce the levels of wood dust in the department are required.
- The subject leader models good practice in both leadership and teaching. Excellent practice that enables students to take increasing responsibility for setting their learning targets for each lesson is consistently established in the department and leads to higher standards of work at Key Stage 4 and above. However students' progress and attainment, curriculum planning and rigour of assessment are not as strong at Key Stage 3.

The extent to which inequality and stereotyping are tackled in D&T:

- The gap between boys and girls attainment is much narrower than is found nationally because the school has successfully encouraged students to take-up courses that meet their interests. Students are very aware of stereotypical and poor design of products.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the quality of students' progress and learning, curriculum planning and the rigour of assessment at Key Stage 3.

We hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE education and design and technology in the school.

As we explained in our 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  
Gina White  
Her Majesty's Inspectors