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Mr S Devereux
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Devereux

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 23 and 24 February 2009 to look at work in PSHE education.

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, your leader of PSHEE, specialist team leaders, the sixth form team, the careers and IAG team, students' from Years 8 to 13, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of three lessons and two assemblies.

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

Achievement and standards

Students' overall achievement in PSHEE is outstanding.

- Students' personal development is outstanding. They are confident, welcoming and polite. They readily give their opinions, are quick thinking and perceptive. Students in the sixth form are particularly reflective, articulate and assertive.

- Students know they should eat five fruit or vegetables a day, and they have a very good understanding of the importance of a balanced diet. Students can explain the need for regular physical exercise.
- Older students have good knowledge of the effects and dangers of drugs, especially tobacco and alcohol. However, not all students are clear about specific risks, particularly of drugs that are more addictive.
- Older students have a good knowledge of the physical changes that take place as they are growing up. Their understanding of sexual relationships is particularly well developed.
- Students work together very well and they undertake responsibilities, such as being 'key influencers' or peer mentors and are able to learn from these experiences.
- Students' social skills, such as discussion, are very well developed. They listen to each other carefully and are able to consider more difficult topics, such as their emotions, with sensitivity.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHEE

The quality of teaching is good and has many outstanding features.

- Teachers' relationships with students are exceptionally good.
- Teachers are very confident and their subject knowledge is very secure because they operate in specialist teams, where they are very well supported by training and guidance.
- Lessons are generally planned well, providing interesting and relevant material, although at times, there is an overdependence on worksheets and a lack of practical activity.
- Lessons often include lively opportunities for students to use their skills, as seen in one lesson where students placed pictures on a continuum to illustrate how stereotyping affects judgments about people.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology to help students learn and research.
- Pastoral care and guidance are strong so students feel very safe and are clear about where to seek advice should the need arise.
- Assessment is at an early stage, so students have limited 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 outstanding.

- The curriculum has been carefully planned through the use of specialist teams of teachers. This has led to some exceptionally good aspects, for example, the programme for sex and relationships education, which is comprehensive.
- Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning materials are used judiciously to complement other elements of the scheme of work. They are effectively employed and enable students to discuss their feelings in a safe and secure environment.

- The curriculum is regularly reviewed and evaluated, and the students' views are incorporated, so it meets their needs very well.
- The curriculum is enriched very well by a wide range of visitors, trips and special events, which allow students to experience variety and challenge.
- The Healthy Schools award has had a positive impact on students' attitudes towards healthy lifestyles, for example, in raising their awareness of healthy eating.
- The school is implementing the new curriculum in Year 7 effectively.

Leadership and management of PSHEE

The leadership and management are outstanding.

- The subject leader has a very secure grasp of the strengths and areas for development in PSHEE.
- All staff are involved through the specialist teams, which has inspired a strong, collaborative approach to planning.
- Staff are well trained within their specialist areas and this has led to many vibrant, relevant activities and a general enthusiasm for PSHEE among students.
- Although there are monitoring systems in place, there is little formal observation of lessons.

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

Prepared for adult life is outstanding.

- Students benefit from a good range of opportunities to express their opinions and listen to each other through the many experiences offered in school.
- The comprehensive and well-planned programme for careers education, throughout the school, helps students to realise their ambitions and widen their horizons.
- There is a very good programme to develop students' financial capability.
- Students benefit from a very wide and well informed range of adults, who are accessible and conscientious in giving them advice and guidance when needed.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing more assessment tasks to track progress 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

Sue Orpin
Additional Inspector