

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



16 October 2009

Mrs S Cromie
Headteacher
Wycombe High School
Marlow Road
High Wycombe
Buckinghamshire
HP11 1TB

Dear Mrs Cromie

Ofsted survey inspection programme – personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 5 and 6 October 2009 to look at work in PSHE education.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the PSHE education, the visit had a particular focus on learning how to stay safe.

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 included: interviews with you, some of your staff, students from Key Stages 3, 4 and the sixth form; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of four lessons and one tutor session.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is outstanding.

Achievement in PSHE education

Students' overall achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Students are articulate, very confident, welcoming and know that their opinions are valued. They are extremely thoughtful, eager to express their views and listen to each other.
- All students are making extremely good progress in their social skills, particularly in terms of their ability to work as a team and undertake leadership roles.

- Students have a very good understanding of how to stay healthy, for example, through a balanced diet and regular exercise.
- Students really enjoy learning PSHE education, especially through focus days when the timetable is suspended. These days provide a wide variety of exciting and relevant activities that allow students to explore issues in depth.
- Some aspects of students' understanding are slightly less well developed, including, for example, relationships in sex education and some elements of managing personal finances.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Relationships between teachers and students are positive and purposeful.
- Students are taught relevant topics. For example, students in a Year 11 class were assessing the risks to the body's water regulation system of taking drugs. As a result, students were interested and focused on their work.
- Occasionally, when PSHE education is being taught through another subject, the learning objectives are unclear, or provide too little challenge, so that students' progress slows.
- Care and support for students are outstanding and they feel valued and very safe.
- Assessment is at an early stage. While there are some good examples, as in the enterprise programme, there is not enough information to show how well students are progressing in PSHE education.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The curriculum in PSHE education is outstanding.

- The curriculum is considerably enriched by an exceptionally interesting range of activities provided on focus days. These cover a wide range of topics, including team-building events, e-safety, healthy lifestyles and first aid qualifications. These events make excellent use of a wide range of visitors and outside agencies.
- Effective use is made of tutor time, which helps to ensure that students' learning continues over time and builds upon their previous lessons and experiences.
- Enterprise and careers education make a very good contribution to students' economic well-being and their future opportunities.
- Exceptionally good consultation with students and parents ensures that the curriculum is securely planned to meet local needs.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are outstanding.

- Strong, committed subject leadership has ensured that provision in PSHE education has improved and continues to do so.
- PSHE education is given a high priority by senior leaders and its value is shared by other staff, who work extremely effectively as a team.
- The monitoring of PSHE education, while effective, needs further development to ensure that progression remains secure as the subject continues to develop.

Subject issue; learning to stay safe

- Students have a very good understanding of how to stay safe, for example, in relation to drugs and sex and relationships education.
- Younger students are helped extremely well to know how to stay safe on the roads and older students learn how to cope with car breakdowns in a safe manner.
- In other subjects, students learn how to use potentially dangerous equipment, such as sharp tools in food technology, in a safe way. They are also very well prepared to cope with mishaps, such as glass breakages in science.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing more assessment tasks for PSHE.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE education 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

Susan Orpin
Additional Inspector