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Mr A Halpin
Principal
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Dear Mr Halpin

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 13 and 14 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 assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Students' overall achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students are confident, caring and thoughtful. They know that their opinions are valued, so they readily express their views.
- All students are making extremely good progress in their financial capability, for example Year 9 students securely understood negative equity, loans, mortgages and investments.

- Students have an extremely good understanding of how to stay safe, both in and outside school.
- Students have a very good understanding of the need for exercise, although their understanding of healthy eating is less secure.
- Students' personal and social skills are slightly less well developed, for example, working in groups, decision making, recognising and dealing with stress.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Relationships between teachers and students are generally positive and purposeful.
- In most lessons, the pace of work is brisk and teachers plan work that is suitably challenging. For example, students in a Year 9 class were planning posters that would help them revise for the forthcoming examination in financial capability.
- Occasionally, lessons are less effective because the pace of work is too slow and the work is too easy, so students become bored and easily distracted.
- Assessment is at an early stage so 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 satisfactory.

- There is not enough time allowed for PSHE education in Key Stage 3 and the intervals between modules are too long, so it is difficult to guarantee progression, for example in the development of students' skills.
- There is insufficient time for PSHE education in Key Stage 4, where most work is dependent on delivery through other subjects.
- The programmes to develop students' abilities in enterprise and their financial capability are extremely effective.
- There is good support for students' career choices through the support of Connexions, but there is no clear programme of lessons for careers education.
- Other subjects make a good contribution to students' knowledge and understanding in PSHE education.
- Students benefit from a wide range of sporting activities and clubs that encourage them to exercise and apply their knowledge about keeping healthy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are satisfactory.

- The very recently appointed acting subject coordinator is enthusiastic, has a clear picture of the strengths and weaknesses and is keen to improve provision in PSHE education.
- The provision for PSHE education across the curriculum has been mapped effectively.
- There is insufficient monitoring of PSHE education, so some weaker aspects have not been identified and acted on.

Subject issue; learning to stay safe

- Students have a very good understanding of how to stay safe, for example, in relation to drugs and road safety.
- The police officer working in the school is used effectively to ensure that students are safe both in and out of school.
- In other subjects, students learn how to use potentially dangerous equipment in a safe way, for example sharp tools in food technology, moving and using equipment in physical education.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the time allocation for PSHE education and the model for its delivery
- developing more assessment tasks for PSHE education.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE education in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter 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