

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

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



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Mr T Gulliver
Headteacher
King Charles I Secondary School
Hill Grove House
Comberton Road
Kidderminster
DY10 1XA

Dear Mr Gulliver

Ofsted 2009-10 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 16 and 17 November 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 how effectively students learn 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 staff and 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

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a good knowledge of the need to stay healthy, and know about the effects of drugs and alcohol. There are high participation rates in sporting activities and two hours of physical education each week.
- Students demonstrate an effective understanding of mental-health issues such as how to deal with stress.

- Students' knowledge and understanding of sex and relationships education is good. They know how to avoid sexually transmitted diseases.
- Students are well-informed about bullying and clearly understand the range of forms it may take, including cyber bullying.
- Students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form have a good knowledge of financial capability, enterprise and the different technical language used by banks. They have a good understanding of career planning and are supported well with future options.
- Students in Key Stage 3 are less secure about economic concepts.
- A minority of students in Key Stage 3 have difficulty in reflecting on topics and expressing their opinions and they are less effective in accurately evaluating their achievements.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is satisfactory.

- Planning for PSHE education is satisfactory but learning objectives are not always clear.
- Relationships between teachers and students are generally positive.
- Teachers use a range of helpful resources to support learning.
- An effective range of assessment opportunities is built into lessons but there is insufficient emphasis on monitoring and recording of students' progress in PSHE education.
- There is variability in quality of work in the books and in the quality of marking.
- Planned activities in lessons do not always meet the needs of individual students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE curriculum is good.

- The PSHE curriculum is broad and permeates many aspects of the school's work, from discrete lessons to 'deep learning days'. This is supplemented by tutor time.
- The provision for the social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme has had a positive impact on improving achievement and attendance and on increasing students' engagement in the school.
- There is a good range of opportunities to develop students' economic well-being, through enterprise and business activities and financial days.
- The needs of vulnerable groups are met well by partnership working and multi-agency work, which support students effectively in developing their personal and social skills.

- PSHE education is not always clearly distinguishable from citizenship in Years 10 and 11. The new approach to delivering PSHE education in Year 10 through core subjects is not yet mapped out in sufficient detail to ensure appropriate coverage of the subject.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- PSHE education has a high profile across the school.
- Overall, PSHE education delivery plans are set out well.
- There is an appropriate PSHE education improvement plan which is linked well to whole-school priorities.
- PSHE subject leadership has been developed effectively, particularly by a range of good support from local authority advisers.
- Monitoring and evaluation of PSHE education are accurate but do not happen frequently enough.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- Students feel safe at school and, through the student council, have used initiatives such as 'name and shame' effectively to deal with any bullying that may occur.
- They have a good understanding about how to stay safe during practical lessons.
- Sixth-form students have a particularly good knowledge about road safety and the dangers of driving while under the influence of alcohol and drugs.
- Parents are very confident that safety issues are covered appropriately and pastoral care is a strength of the school. The only concern they raise is the insufficient focus on railway safety.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of teaching to ensure that all the lessons meet the needs of individual students, particularly those with special educational needs and/or disabilities
- ensuring students' progress in PSHE education is monitored and recorded regularly.

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

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector