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Mrs L Aston
Acting Principal
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Dear Mrs Aston

Ofsted 2009/10 subject survey inspection programme: personal, social, health and economic (PSHE) education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on Tuesday 26 January 2010 to look at work in PSHE education.

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

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with you, your PSHE coordinator and head of faculty, form tutors, two groups of students, a parent governor and the healthy schools coordinator; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of six lessons and a Year 10 careers assembly; and a tour of the dining areas within the school.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have good knowledge of sex and relationships and drugs education. They are aware of how to make choices and decisions and resist peer pressure.

- They are confident about career options and choices because of the good support they receive throughout their school life.
- Students are provided with good opportunities to develop their leadership skills, for example through membership of the school council or by acting as arts ambassadors, prefects and sports leaders.
- Students' personal and social skills are good. They are polite and confident when speaking to visitors or leading whole school events, such as assemblies.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching of PSHE education across the curriculum is satisfactory. Teachers' plans do not give sufficient attention to how skills related to PSHE are going to be developed.
- Form tutors develop good relationships and trust with their students and they teach most of the PSHE curriculum and suspended time-table days. Tutors stay with the same forms as they move through the school.
- Students learn a lot from the mixed themes and topics during suspended time-table days and enjoy the high quality specialist input from the regular visits by outside speakers.
- Evaluation of the impact of the various sessions within the suspended time-table days is a regular feature of the PSHE curriculum. However, more formal assessment strategies to gauge knowledge and measure students' progress are less well developed.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE curriculum is good.

- PSHE education is taught mainly in five suspended time-table days throughout the year and focused PSHE themes within lessons across the curriculum. For example, bullying is a good focus for the Year 7 dance curriculum. The quality and impact of these cross curricular themes varies between subjects.
- Good use is made of external agencies to support the teaching of particular aspects of PSHE education, such as drink driving and career planning. The school nurse contributes to sex and relationships education.
- The PSHE scheme of work is well-mapped throughout the school to enable key topics to be appropriately re-visited as students get older.
- The implications of the effects of alcohol are not sufficiently high profile within the scheme of work. It has proved difficult to gain the help of outside agencies to support this area of work.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- The PSHE and health education coordinators provide good support to help their colleagues deliver the five suspended time-table days throughout the year. Staff also have access to good resources and focused individual support.
- The move from weekly PSHE lessons to suspended time-table days was well managed and coordinated.
- PSHE improvement planning currently lacks sufficient measurable success criteria with a focus on raising attainment.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

Students report that they feel safe in school. They know the dangers and impact of cyber-bullying and how to keep safe, for example by protecting their internet passwords. Good work in sex and relationships education ensures students understand how to look after themselves. Staff are always visible around the school site and the pastoral team and form tutors provide good support to ensure students' safety. There is also a focus on safety within teacher's planning.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that PSHE education improvement plans include measurable success criteria
- formalising assessment strategies for PSHE education
- raising the profile of the implications of excessive alcohol consumption.

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

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector