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Mrs E Brett
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Brett

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 4 and 5 February 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 staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of four lessons and two form group sessions.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is satisfactory.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- Students have a good understanding of healthy eating and the need for exercise. They have secure knowledge about the dangers of alcohol, drugs and tobacco, but their understanding about the social effects of alcohol and how it works on the brain is weaker. Sex and relationships education is sound.
- Students have a good awareness of the different types of bullying and where to get help. They have had the opportunity to practise resisting peer-group pressure.

- Students have a basic understanding about skills for employability and they are developing these. They have learned about budgeting and simple economic concepts through the simulation called the 'Real Game', enterprise days and well-organised work experience, but the learning is not developed or consolidated as well as it could be.
- Personal development is good and students are friendly, polite and well-behaved. They are articulate in individual discussions and listen to each other well. They respect their teachers and each other. Presentation skills in group situations need to be further developed. Students have positive attitudes to PSHE education.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is satisfactory.

- Lessons are characterised by good relationships and strong classroom management and discipline. Teachers showed high levels of care and support for students, and as a result, students feel safe and secure and are able to express their own opinions.
- Learning objectives and outcomes, for PSHE education form group sessions and for PSHE education through other subjects, are not detailed or clear enough and they do not provide sufficient challenge.
- Questioning techniques were not always used well to ensure all students were engaged in the learning, and some of the tasks were not broken down sufficiently.
- There is no formal system of assessment or reporting to parents on PSHE education except through other subjects, for example science and English.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE education curriculum is inadequate.

- The school is in the process of transition. This year, PSHE education is being taught by tutors in form group time in week blocks. This model means that time is very short and it is difficult to achieve any depth of teaching, or ensure development of knowledge and understanding over time.
- There are no clear or detailed schemes of work in place.
- A strength of the curriculum is the excellent range of extra-curricular activities, especially sport as a result of sports college status, and the wide range of planned enrichment activities which gives students many opportunities to develop and apply social and personal skills. Students are aware of the learning that takes place and report gains as: relationship-building, increased confidence, knowledge of other cultures, anti-discrimination and learning about art.
- The school is well on the way to achieving the Healthy School award and the work towards this has already had an impact on the quality and take-up of school lunches.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are satisfactory.

- The new school leadership team have accurately evaluated the quality of the present system of teaching PSHE education and they have clear, well-targeted plans to improve the situation. Capacity to improve is good.
- Currently, there is no PSHE coordinator but one is to be appointed soon. A senior member of staff has recently been appointed to oversee the whole area and to ensure there is a coherent and less fragmented approach.
- There is no formal monitoring or lesson observation of PSHE education at present, although there are also plans for these in the school improvement plan.
- The availability of training is good, and one teacher already holds the PSHE certificate.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- This aspect is good. Students say they feel safe in school and they have been prepared well for dangers outside school. They move sensibly around and demonstrate safe procedures in physical education lessons and when moving desks. Students, except for Year7, have all completed basic first-aid training.
- Students have developed a very good knowledge of how to handle risk through their sporting and enrichment activities.
- Parents are confident that students are well briefed and feel their children are looked after very well.
- The school has the right balance of awareness of risk but not allowing risk to inhibit activities. For example, students with physical disabilities are included on trips and residential visits.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the curriculum to ensure there is sufficient curriculum time to teach a coherent PSHE programme in sufficient depth
- writing clear schemes of work with detailed objectives, outcomes and assessment tasks
- ensuring high-quality, trained, curriculum leadership for PSHE education, including economic well-being and careers education and guidance.

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

As I explained previously, 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

Margaret Jones
Her Majesty's Inspector