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Mr A Pugh
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Dear Mr Pugh

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 1 and 2 March 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, one assembly and drop-in visits to form time.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a good understanding of how to stay physically healthy and eat a balanced diet. Participation in sporting activities is high. However, students are less secure in their knowledge of mental health.
- Students have good knowledge about the effects of drugs and alcohol misuse and the consequences of such behaviour. They show good levels of awareness about personal safety and can assess risks that inform

lifestyle choices. They have a sound knowledge about sex and relationships education and sexual health risks.

- Students understand about the different types of bullying and make use of the purple bullying box to raise issues. They have effective strategies to minimise peer pressure.
- Students are well informed about future options and careers. They have learnt about budgeting and taken part in enterprise activities, but their knowledge of aspects of financial terms and money matters is not broad enough.
- Personal development is good. Students are confident, friendly and get on well together. Some readily contribute their views and are very articulate.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Teachers use a range of interesting activities to engage students in their learning.
- Teachers show good subject knowledge and clear links to PSHE objectives.
- Teachers and form tutors develop good relationships and trust with their students. Behaviour is managed well and, as a result, students feel safe and are able to express their viewpoints.
- Good use is made of group work which encourages students to be independent learners.
- Questioning techniques are not always used effectively to ensure all students are engaged in their learning.
- Lesson plans, while identifying the different needs of students, do not always use appropriate tasks or resources to meet these needs.
- Assessment opportunities are provided for students but these are not fully used as a basis for the reporting of PSHE education.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE education curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and includes both discrete and cross-curricular delivery. Students are well served by the alternative curriculum days which provide stimulating and varied activities and topics.
- A wide range of external agencies and experts is used to good effect to support the PSHE education curriculum.
- Vulnerable students receive very good support from the learning support unit with courses on anger management which focus on personal well-being.
- The Healthy Schools award has been influential in increasing sporting activities, enhancing emotional health and well-being, reducing smoking and encouraging healthy eating.

- Specialist languages status has made a positive contribution to PSHE education by developing languages in business. It has supported a range of study visits to develop an understanding of diversity and different cultural groups.
- The links between alternative curriculum days, form time and assemblies are not fully coordinated and used to strengthen the provision of PSHE education across the curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- PSHE education is given appropriate priority by senior leaders.
- The subject leadership has developed many aspects of the provision and has ensured that the curriculum is up to date. There is good commitment and awareness of what needs to be developed further.
- Action plans clearly identify the priorities for health education but not always the issues in other areas of PSHE education.
- Good use is made of local authority advisers and resources are well used.
- Monitoring and evaluation of lessons and the quality of provision are insufficient. Too much is informal.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- The school's Alternative Curriculum Day programme includes a significant focus on issues of safety, such as knife crime, railway safety and domestic violence. The links with the local police officer are particularly productive.
- Students have a good knowledge about e-safety when using the internet and personal safety in and outside school. They all complete first aid training by Year 11.
- Students feel very safe in school. Staff are always visible around the school site and pastoral support is good.
- Parents are confident that the school focuses sufficiently on staying safe and students are looked after well.
- Students are well briefed about safety in practical subjects and avoid carrying bags around school. They all have individual lockers and move around the school sensibly.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- establishing thorough procedures for assessment and reporting of PSHE education so they reflect the end of key stage statements accurately
- establishing PSHE education as a formal part of the school's quality assurances procedures.

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

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector