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Dear Mr Clemence

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 8 and 9 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 an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is outstanding.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Students' understanding of healthy lifestyles is excellent. They are well informed about the dangers of drugs, alcohol and tobacco. Students have excellent strategies to manage risk when making lifestyle choices.
- They have a detailed knowledge about sex relationships education and sexually transmitted diseases. Students have opportunities to discuss different types and contexts for relationships.
- Students develop very positive relationships with adults and peers from different year groups because of the vertical tutoring system.

- Students can recognise difference and diversity and demonstrate strong empathy towards others who live different lives.
- They are prepared well for the future through detailed advice and guidance on careers and discussion of options.
- The personal development of students is outstanding. During their time at school, students are given many opportunities to develop leadership skills and be part of a team. Students are very confident and articulate.
- Students' knowledge of financial capability is satisfactory.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are planned very well with many effective strategies engaging students in their learning.
- Teachers show very good subject knowledge.
- Questioning and discussion activities are managed very well, encouraging students to talk about sensitive and controversial issues. Students respect the viewpoints of others.
- A range of good resources supports students' learning.
- Not all lessons meet the individual needs of students sufficiently, such as those with special educational needs and/or disabilities or the more able.
- Assessment, monitoring and reporting of PSHE education is not sufficiently developed.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is rich and provides many opportunities for high quality PSHE education and wider personal development. It ranges from discrete delivery which is enhanced by vertical tutoring to focus days and student support services.
- Appropriate schemes of work and lesson plans are in place for discrete delivery.
- There is excellent support for students at risk and vulnerable students through the refocusing centre and well-targeted intervention strategies.
- The school uses an increasingly broad range of external agencies to support the PSHE education curriculum; this includes theatre companies and motivational speakers.
- Specialist status in both media arts and applied learning make an excellent contribution to PSHE education. Students have produced a very powerful video on drink-driving which was shown in the weekly broadcast to all students. The views of students are sought to inform curriculum planning on alcohol.

- Gaining healthy schools status has had a positive impact on the curriculum, leading to an increase in the number of health-related activities in the curriculum, especially in the sixth form.
- Aspects of financial capability are well covered in Year 9 and 12. A high proportion of Year 12 students opts to take the certificate in financial management and is very successful.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- Senior leaders and managers have been very successful in establishing a high profile for PSHE education across the school.
- There is very effective monitoring and evaluation of the different aspects of the PSHE education programme.
- The school has an accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses. Various subject improvement plans identify the priorities for PSHE education.
- However, not all aspects of PSHE education have been fully coordinated to gain a coherent overview of the subject.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- Students have an outstanding understanding about being safe. They are taught to manage risks and many apply what they have learnt.
- The curriculum coverage is very broad and well targeted to the appropriate age ranges. Sixth-form students have a good focus on safe driving and personal safety. Parents support this view.
- Students have a very good knowledge about safety when using new technologies.
- Students feel very safe in school and are very confident that any issues are dealt with. Many comment on the student support centre being an excellent base for support and help.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the assessment, monitoring and reporting of PSHE education.

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