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22 March 2010

Mrs E Wilson  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Wilson

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 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 you, some of your 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, a tutor period and a lecture for the sixth form.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students' personal development is outstanding. They are extremely confident, friendly and reflective. Students have very well-developed discussion skills and are highly articulate, especially in the sixth form.
- Students have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy. They know the importance of a healthy diet and regular exercise, and most students use their knowledge to make healthy choices.

- Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the effects and dangers of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. They have learned how to stay safe both in and out of school. However, some students have had less opportunity to learn and practise the skills needed to resist peer-group pressure.
- Students have a good understanding of sexual health risks and they have a good knowledge of the factual elements of sex and relationships education. However, their understanding of the changing nature of relationships between young men and women is less well developed.
- Students have a good knowledge of the symptoms of stress and know how to deal with it.
- They are making good progress in developing their financial capability and are extremely well prepared for the next stage of their education and adult life.

### Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are planned and prepared very well.
- Relationships between teachers and students are very purposeful and positive and, as a result, students are highly motivated to learn.
- When PSHE education is being taught through other subjects, there are good opportunities for students to develop their skills, as seen in a physical education lesson where students learned about leadership and then put their skills into practice by being team leaders.
- There is some variation in the quality of lessons. Some teachers' subject knowledge is insecure, so the lessons they teach are less interesting and valuable for students.
- Teaching provides very good support and guidance. Students highly value academic tutoring and careers guidance because it helps to improve their learning.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development, so it does not show how well students are progressing.

### Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE education curriculum is good.

- The curriculum has been developed in response to students' views and is now more relevant and interesting. As one student said, 'PSHE is good because it relates to real life.'
- The curriculum is enriched very well by days when the timetable is suspended, and also when trips and visitors make lessons more interesting. There are also residential trips, such as skiing, and visitors who talk about such topics as e-safety and train safety.

- The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been planned creatively to provide an accredited course that students enjoy and value.
- Enterprise, financial capability provision and careers education make a good contribution to students' economic well-being and their opportunities in later life.
- Curriculum documentation is developing well and shows topics that will be taught, but there are no schemes of work that indicate what students are expected to be able to do in different year groups.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- There is a clear vision for the subject and an accurate understanding of the few areas needing development.
- Although those leading the subject are well informed, there have been fewer opportunities for teachers to develop their expertise through training.
- Monitoring of PSHE education ensures that students learn about a wide range of topics, but it does not yet give a clear picture of the quality of provision.

#### Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- In other subjects, students learn how to use potentially dangerous equipment in a safe way, for example, the use of chemicals in science, and road safety and water safety in geography.
- Students feel extremely safe and know they are well cared for.
- Students are less secure in the development of some of their skills, such as being able to resist peer-group pressure.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the current organisation of the curriculum to ensure suitable challenge for different year groups
- developing more assessment tasks for 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

Susan Orpin  
Additional Inspector