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14 May 2010

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Dear Mr Fay

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 and 23 March 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 how 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 governors, staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of 10 lessons, two tutor groups and a lunch break.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a sound knowledge of healthy eating and understand the importance of physical activity. Participation rates are high in the range of provision on offer, particularly in orienteering where students compete nationally and internationally.
- They understand bullying including cyber-bullying and manage risk and peer-pressure well.

- Students understand career planning. A good programme, including contributions from various colleges and employers, ensures they understand their range of options.
- Students are friendly and polite and most are happy to contribute and express their views.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Lesson planning is excellent with clear learning objectives for all ability levels.
- Teachers promote good relationships and manage behaviour well.
- In most lessons, students have opportunities to practise independent and group learning, but in some the teacher is too dominant.
- Appropriate assessment strategies are employed and students are aware of the skills they are developing and how to improve further.
- The common assessment system used in other subject areas has been modified appropriately for PSHE education.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Because at Key Stage 4 it is delivered along with Citizenship and RE as part of the Citizenship & Ethics course, the number of PSHE Ed. lessons is halved. Delivery of the full entitlement now relies heavily on supplementary work done in tutor groups.
- The social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) programme has had a positive effect on students' achievement.
- The curriculum meets all statutory requirements and is responsive to local needs and provision, such as those of employers and partners.
- Engagement with the Healthy Schools programme has clearly had a positive effect on health and well-being.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

Leadership and management in PSHE education are good.

- An effective, well-led team plans and delivers the curriculum. The senior leadership team is committed to PSHE education.
- Monitoring and evaluation of PSHE education are accurate and there is a good programme of lesson observation.
- Specialist staff training is good, as is the capacity to improve further.
- Good links exist with parents and outside agencies to support the work in PSHE education and links with feeder primary schools are excellent.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- Students feel safe and secure in school and enjoy a range of support, including a peer-mentor service which won a Princess Diana Anti-bullying Award.
- Students have a clear understanding of safety issues in practical subjects and of e-safety.
- Young people contribute to risk assessments before activities, ensuring understanding and ownership of rules and procedures.
- Parents are confident that safety issues are covered well.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring there is sufficient time at Key Stage 4 to teach the PSHE education curriculum fully
- providing more opportunities for independent and group learning
- accelerating the engagement in the Healthy Schools programme to move to the enhanced model as soon as possible.

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

Patrick Hargreaves
Additional Inspector