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Dear Mr Foreman

Ofsted 2010–11 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 February 2011 to look at work in PSHE education.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of seven lessons, a tutor period and an assembly; and a visit to a community facility.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good with outstanding features.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students' personal development is outstanding. They have extremely positive attitudes towards PSHE education. They form open and trusting relationships that enable them to express their feelings and opinions. Students grow in confidence and maturity during their time in school and enjoy opportunities to discuss PSHE topics to deepen their understanding, and to learn from each other.
- Students have good knowledge and understanding of the different food groups that contribute to a balanced and healthy diet, and why some foods should be restricted. Numbers accessing school meals are rising;

students have access to a wide range of healthy choices. Students know the benefits of exercise for physical and mental health and a high proportion take part in sporting activities.

- Students understand the risks associated with drugs, alcohol and smoking. They have good opportunities to explore peer pressure in PSHE lessons and drama, and to develop strategies to keep themselves safe.
- Students have good knowledge and understanding of sexual health issues, the different forms of contraception and associated risks. They do not explore all the different types of relationships in depth.
- Students are well prepared for their next stage of education through the well-planned careers education and work-experience programmes. This is a stronger feature for older learners. Students at risk benefit from a range of special programmes to support their achievement and progression to post-16 education, training or employment.
- Students' social responsibility is developed particularly well through a wide range of opportunities and initiatives, some of which are initiated by the students themselves. Students are enthusiastic about charity fundraising and proud of their support to a school in India which has broadened their understanding and awareness. A range of leadership roles such as 'buddies' for Year 7, peer leaders, sports captains and ambassadors helps to promote good teamwork, an awareness of the diverse needs of others and a cohesive and welcoming community.
- Students have a good understanding of bullying and the effects on mental health. They have had more limited opportunities to discuss and research issues linked to homophobic bullying.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Teachers demonstrate good subject knowledge and confidence in teaching PSHE education. Outside speakers make a valuable contribution to the programme to bring a wider range of expertise and life experiences which students appreciate.
- Teachers create a safe and supportive learning environment to allow students to debate social, health and political issues openly and with confidence.
- Lessons are well planned with clear objectives and learning outcomes for PSHE education supported by an effective range of interactive activities to maximise participation. Research and creativity are promoted well through the use of information and communication technology to produce high-quality presentations.
- Assessment is integral to lesson planning to support the monitoring of progress against targets. Teachers make frequent reference to level descriptors that help students to demonstrate their knowledge, skills and understanding. Progress is carefully monitored and reported to parents with helpful comments and targets to promote improvement.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is outstanding.

- The school provides an excellent age-appropriate curriculum for PSHE that incorporates resources to promote an awareness and appreciation of different cultures. Topics are revisited and extended to support good progress. Close links with religious education facilitate a flexible approach to enable local issues or concerns to be incorporated.
- Designated curriculum time for PSHE education is complemented by planned cross-curricular contributions, form time and assemblies. This is enhanced by popular 'Stop the Clock' events that allow themes, such as health, to be studied in depth in one day, and to facilitate external input. Students talk enthusiastically about these events which provide relevant and memorable experiences.
- Provision to meet the needs of different groups of students and their families is outstanding. Individual needs and barriers to success are carefully identified to inform a range of intervention programmes.
- The PSHE curriculum includes a variety of accredited courses across the age range to validate students' skills, such as certification for first aid and HeartStart. This has sharpened the focus on progress monitoring.
- Information, advice and guidance are readily available in the library with support in place for students to explore their next steps. The school works effectively with Connexions to target vulnerable students. The school is working towards the Investors in Careers Education award. However, careers education is not as well developed in Key Stage 3.
- The Healthy Schools award has had a positive impact on healthy eating and the promotion of exercise.
- The wide range of extra-curricular activities and leadership responsibilities gives students outstanding opportunities to develop, apply and practise their personal and social skills.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

Leadership and management in PSHE education are good.

- PSHE education has a high profile in the school and is effectively promoted by you, senior leaders and subject specialist. Staff are very clear that the personal well-being of learners is crucial if students are to thrive and make the most of their opportunities in school.
- Subject leadership is strong; a high priority is placed on training for the specialist team. The PSHE coordinator has the PSHE certificate and has used other national leadership programmes to develop the curriculum.
- The monitoring of the quality of teaching and learning in PSHE lessons is an integral part of whole-school monitoring, alongside other quality assurance processes, such as work scrutiny. Observation notes do not draw out clearly enough the relationship between the features of teaching and the impact on progress for different groups of students.

- Self-evaluation is broadly accurate with appropriate priorities for improvement. Action plans are less well developed and do not have measurable success criteria to facilitate robust evaluation.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- further developing provision for careers education in Key Stage 3 to raise aspirations, and to extend students' awareness of career, training and employment opportunities
- improving the quality of PSHE improvement planning so that progress can be checked and evaluated against explicit and measurable success criteria.

I hope that 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 published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Nada Trikić
Her Majesty's Inspector