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Mr O'Hagan  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr O'Hagan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Personal, Social and health Education (PSHE)

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 21 February to look at work in PSHE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on:

- how the PSHE curriculum meets the specific needs of students in your local area, and how progress is tracked and assessed; and
- the contribution made by PSHE to the future economic well-being of your students.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included interviews with you, the assistant headteacher, the Key Stage 4 PSHE co-ordinator and the Learning Director for Year 8, students from Year 9, 11 and the sixth form, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE was judged to be satisfactory.

## Achievement

Achievement in PSHE is satisfactory.

- Students have a good understanding of what is meant by a balanced diet and the importance of regular exercise. Most of them apply their knowledge by participating in the range of physical activities provided for them.
- They know how to keep themselves safe, and they have learnt about bullying and how to seek help. They are not quite as clear about why they should not use homophobic language.
- Students are aware about the effects of drugs but are not as clear about the social impact of the misuse of alcohol and tobacco.
- Students have good knowledge about the British political system and have a satisfactory understanding of what is meant by fair trade and globalisation.
- Personal development is good. Students are friendly and polite, and express their opinions confidently. They have positive attitudes to PSHE, and behaviour is generally good except where students are not fully engaged in the lesson and then there is some low level disruption.
- Students feel confident to confide in a range of staff if they have problems.

## Quality of teaching and learning in PSHE

Teaching and learning are satisfactory.

- Teachers have good relationship with students and act as good role models.
- The lessons seen were dominated by the teacher and students were not always fully engaged or challenged to produce more extended and reasoned responses.
- The teaching in Key Stage 3 is by tutors and the quality varies too much across forms.
- Teachers lack specialist knowledge because they have not received the training and support required, and expectations are low.
- Satisfactory use is made of information and communications technology (ICT). In one lesson effective use was made of photographs of different farming techniques from Google.
- There is no formal assessment or tracking of students' progress in PSHE.

## Quality of the curriculum

The PSHE curriculum is satisfactory.

- Time for PSHE is tight, and the different structures for teaching PSHE across the Key Stages means that it is difficult to build on prior learning, and teachers do not have the opportunity to develop specialist knowledge.

- Health education is taught across the curriculum but the provision is not mapped and the school has not yet achieved Healthy School status, although it is preparing for the award.
- The PSHE curriculum has not been designed to meet the needs of students, and although there are outline programmes of study there are no comprehensive schemes of work or lesson plans.
- A range of outside agencies are used effectively to enrich the PSHE curriculum.
- Students have good opportunities to put what they have learnt into practice through the range of extra-curricular activities provided. As one student commented, "I could do a different club or activity every lunch time and every day after school if I wanted".
- The school council functions well and gives students an opportunity for active citizenship. Students report they feel valued and listened to.
- The school's specialist college status for languages has had a positive impact in raising awareness of other cultures.

### Leadership and management of PSHE

Leadership and management for PSHE are inadequate.

- PSHE has low status within the school; there is no PSHE policy and there is no overall co-ordinator in place.
- Insufficient time has been allocated for planning and co-ordination at Key Stages 3 and 4.
- Teachers lack effective support, in terms of lesson plans, resources and training.
- Some lesson observation has been carried out by the senior management team but there has been none by the Key Stage 4 co-ordinator or the Directors of Learning in Key Stage 3.
- The present action plans do not address the key challenges facing the subject. However, an accurate self-evaluation has been carried out.

### Subject issue: preparation for economic well-being

Students are well-prepared for their future careers.

- Sixth form students feel they have been well supported in making decisions about their next steps. There are good links with the Connexions Service.
- Students take on a wide range of responsibilities across the school. For example, sixth form students run a highly successful Information Point where younger students can get advice from outside agencies.
- Year 10 students take part in a mini-enterprise activity and all go out on work experience.
- Careers education for Key Stage 3 needs to be further developed.

## Inclusion

Inclusion is satisfactory.

- The very few students from minority ethnic backgrounds appear well integrated and achieve as well as others.
- Little differentiation was seen in PSHE lessons or planning, except for some effective help from a learning support assistant for students with statements of educational need.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- raising the status of PSHE by ensuring coherent co-ordination across the key stages
- raising the quality of teaching by building up specialist expertise
- introducing a rigorous assessment of learning outcomes.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, 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

Margaret Jones  
Her Majesty's Inspector