

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040
F 0207 421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr N Mountford
Headteacher
The Harwich School
Hall Lane
Dovercourt
Essex
CO12 3TG

Dear Mr Mountford

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Personal, Social, Health and Economic Education (PSHEE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 14 and 15 October 2008 to look at work in PSHEE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on economic well being and information, advice and guidance (IAG).

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 deputy head teacher, the head of PSHEE, the head of careers and guidance, the head of sixth form, the head of inclusion, and groups of students from Year 10, Years 12 and 13 and representatives from the student council, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of four lessons and a mentoring session for Year 11 and training for sixth formers in peer mentoring for sex and relationship education.

The overall effectiveness of PSHEE education was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement in PSHEE

Achievement is satisfactory.

- Students across the school have a good understanding of healthy eating and the importance of exercise but they do not always apply what they have learnt to their choice of food at lunchtime.
- They understand what is meant by peer group pressure and have had opportunities to practise resisting it.

- Some of their knowledge of other issues is more superficial because of teaching that lacks expertise and a lack of time to develop learning.
- Personal development is good. Students are friendly, open and candid. They are responsive in class and keen to learn and find out new information, but speaking skills are more limited and some students struggle to express their ideas coherently.
- Students behave well in lessons. They have positive views about PSHEE. They enjoy the lessons and can see their purpose and relevance but they would like them to be more practical and active.
- The group of sixth formers who have volunteered to lead sex and relationship education for Year 9 students are developing excellent skills of speaking, listening, empathy, teamwork and managing role play.

Quality of teaching and learning of PSHEE

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Strengths in the lessons observed were good behaviour management, respectful, productive relationships, and effective use of resources. Students report that the quality of lessons has improved over recent years.
- There are effective lesson plans and schemes of work in place to support teaching but lesson objectives not always translated into student friendly learning objectives.
- Students are not always fully engaged in activities. Little group work, independent research, structured debate, or role-play, were seen.
- Learning is sometimes superficial and teaching lacks challenge because tutors do not have in-depth subject knowledge.
- An exception to the above was an outstanding piece of creative work, a film called Jo's Journey made by a group of Year 9 and 10 students about the experience of immigrants. This project gave students the opportunity to explore issues and examine facing challenges. It raised esteem and built confidence and independence.
- Assessment systems are in place and are good but they are not implemented consistently across the school.

Quality of the curriculum

The curriculum for PSHEE is good.

- The school is aware of the new curriculum reforms and they have planned careers education, work related learning and enterprise through PSHEE lessons, work experience and themed events so that most aspects of economic well-being are well covered.
- Some social and emotional aspects of learning (SEAL) resources are being used well to supplement PSHEE resources in topics such as bullying.
- The curriculum is responsive to the expressed needs of students, and to local and national concerns. Students are included well in PSHEE lessons and related activities.

- The sixth form curriculum is developing well and there is a planned programme of PSHEE related activities which students enjoy.
- The school council works well and gives students an experience of active citizenship.
- The achievement of Healthy Schools status has had a positive impact on the PSHEE curriculum with whole school events taking to raise awareness of health issues.
- The community lesson and themed events supplement well the PSHE programme and allows students to opportunities to apply and develop PSHEE skills as does work in other subjects.
- However, despite this, time is very tight. Two half hour sessions a week for PSHEE, citizenship and careers education and guidance is not really long enough for high quality teaching and learning to take place.

Leadership and management of PSHEE

Leadership and management are good.

- The PSHEE coordinator is well supported by the senior management team and provided with good administrative support. She has worked hard to provide tutors with good schemes of work and helpful lesson plans.
- Very good policies are in places. Self-evaluation is thorough and accurate and based on classroom observation and the views of students.
- The recently appointed careers co-ordinator is doing a good job and has evaluated provision accurately and knows what has to be improved.
- These two effective leaders do not have the impact on achievement and teaching they should because of the lack of time and the lack of specialist teaching in PSHEE.
- Some teachers have now received expert training in sex and relationships education and more training is planned, so that there is good potential for further improvement.

Subject issue: economic well-being and information, advice and guidance

This area is satisfactory overall.

- Sixth form students are well-prepared for the next step in their education.
- The careers co-ordinator has established an outstanding mentoring scheme which links a group of Year 11 students with a mentor from the world of work.
- There is a planned programme of careers education and guidance taught through extended tutor time, but this is of variable quality. The current relationship with the Connexions service does not ensure that all students have access to accurate and impartial careers advice and guidance.
- There is a careers library but it is in urgent need of refurbishment and is not well used by students.

- The recently appointed careers co-ordinator is working hard to improve provision in all every respect.
- Valuable work experience for Year 10 and a good range of enterprise activities are planned into the curriculum. Weaker areas are economic and business understanding and personal finance.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving students' knowledge and understanding in PSHEE
- building a team of more specialised tutors to teach different aspects of PSHEE
- adapting the timetable to allow more consolidated time for this area of work

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHEE 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