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14 December 2009

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Headteacher
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Dear Ms Edwards

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 25 November 2009 to look at work in PSHE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of PSHE, 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 staff, a parent governor and a group of pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work; and joint observation of two lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE is satisfactory.

Achievement in PSHE

Achievement in PSHE is satisfactory.

- Pupils are able to reflect and discuss sensibly their understanding of a range of issues, such as the impact of poverty on people's well-being.
- Pupils are prepared satisfactorily for later life. They demonstrate good social skills and moral values and these contribute to their good behaviour and positive attitudes to learning. Pupils say they would welcome more opportunities to contribute to their local community.
- Pupils are developing their understanding of how to stay physically and mentally healthy and recognise the importance of taking regular exercise

and having breakfast. However, their knowledge of what constitutes a balanced diet is less well-developed.

Quality of teaching of PSHE

The quality of teaching in the PSHE is satisfactory.

- Teaching makes learning relevant and interesting by using a range of audio and visual resources.
- Teaching and support staff exemplify positive attitudes and behaviour. This helps to secure high levels of respect among pupils and between staff and pupils.
- Additional adults make a strong contribution to ensuring that the most vulnerable pupils are included in school life and participate well in lessons. This includes, when necessary, the use of non-verbal techniques and information and communication technology (ICT) to help pupils to communicate.
- Teachers ensure that ground rules are well understood before starting PSHE related activities. This encourages pupils to try new things, which helps them develop their confidence and self-esteem.
- Weaker aspects of teaching include the use of assessment strategies to support and enhance learning. This, at times, slows the pace of learning and leads to low levels of challenge for the more able.
- Planning is satisfactory, but it does not clarify how the skills, knowledge and understanding of the more able pupils will be extended.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE

The quality of the PSHE curriculum is satisfactory.

- Recent improvements to the curriculum have ensured the programme of work is comprehensive and promotes progression. However, it has yet to be implemented consistently well throughout the school. As a result, pupils' knowledge and understanding in some areas are less well-developed and there are missed opportunities for pupils to apply and improve some of the skills that will help them in the future.
- The school makes effective use of published materials to support the specific needs of pupils who are particularly deficient in their ability to develop and maintain relationships, and who display particularly low levels of self-esteem.
- Links between PSHE and other subjects are clearly mapped out. There is currently insufficient guidance for staff on how to plan work that extends learning for those pupils who are more able.
- Trips, visitors and extra-curricular activities enhance the curriculum well. Pupils spoke very enthusiastically about the work of an archaeologist following a visit they found particularly fascinating.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE

Leadership and management of PSHE are satisfactory.

- There is good support for PSHE from the senior management team and governors. This has ensured the subject has a high profile in school.
- The role of the PSHE coordinator is underdeveloped in some areas. As a result, although the school has a generally accurate view of its strengths and weaknesses, action planning and evaluations do not focus sharply enough on outcomes for learners. There is also a lack of rigour in the systems used to assess, monitor and track progress.
- The school has received good support from the local authority, and this has helped to improve the overall quality of curriculum provision.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- Pupils demonstrate a good knowledge of personal safety, including their ability to recognise potential hazards.
- Parents are well informed of the school's work in teaching pupils how to be safe.
- Pupils are taught how to use tools and equipment safely.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing the role of the PSHE coordinator so that progress and standards are monitored more rigorously, and action and evaluation plans focus more sharply on outcomes for pupils
- improving the use of assessment strategies in lessons so that teachers are better able to identify when the more able pupils are ready to be challenged
- providing curriculum guidance for teachers about how to plan work that helps to extend learning for the more able.

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

Gehane Gordelier
Her Majesty's Inspector