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Mrs R Hetherton  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Hetherton

Ofsted 2009-10 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 10 February 2010 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 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 you, and other senior staff with an overview of PSHE education, a parent governor, the head of PSHE and the behaviour learning mentor; scrutiny of relevant documentation; discussions with two groups of students; observation of three lessons; and a walk around the school at break and lunchtime to observe social interaction and lunchtime arrangements.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a secure knowledge of sex and relationships and drugs education and are aware of the implications of drugs and alcohol on their bodies.
- They have good knowledge of possible career paths and a growing awareness of financial issues that will affect their lives.

- Students' personal and social skills are generally good, although a minority exhibit inappropriate behaviour.
- A large number of students develop good leadership skills through their involvement as prefects, peer mentors or as part of the Duke of Edinburgh scheme.

#### Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- While there are many good and outstanding features of PSHE education teaching by specialist teachers, there is considerable variability when the subject is not taught by specialists.
- Lively and practical activities are evident in many lessons. Students evidently enjoy the content and contribute extended answers to focused questioning.
- Outstanding support is provided by the behaviour learning mentor to those students who have been identified as having poor social skills. Initial assessments, close involvement with parents and measurement of the progress made are strong features.
- Assessment in PSHE education lessons is at the early stages of development and has been identified as an area for improvement by the head of department.

#### Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE education curriculum is good.

- The PSHE education curriculum is constantly under review and amended annually to meet the changing needs of students.
- The curriculum is carefully mapped throughout the school to ensure that the weekly lessons cover important topics at the appropriate stage of students' development. Key topics, such as sex and relationship and drugs education, are regularly revisited.
- Good enrichment to the PSHE education curriculum is provided by high-quality outside speakers whose knowledge of their subject is respected by students and has a significant impact on their learning.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- The leadership of PSHE education has ensured that the curriculum is up to date and relevant.
- Good quality teaching resources are constantly being devised and shared with other PSHE education teachers.

- There have been good professional development opportunities for the PSHE education team, although less for the non-specialists who also teach the subject.
- There are insufficient opportunities for the head of department to monitor and support non-specialist members of the PSHE education team.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- Students are provided with a wide range of appropriate information that enables them to stay safe. They know how to protect passwords on computers and the personal impact of cyber-bullying. They are aware of the effects of smoking and alcohol on their bodies and are given appropriate advice on how to avoid unwanted pregnancies. Good advice is also provided for students travelling to school by bike or by train with appropriate support being given by the transport police.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that the head of department has sufficient opportunities to monitor and support non-specialist members of the PSHE education team
- ensuring that all students are able to use appropriate behaviour and social skills in different situations.

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

Clive Kempton  
Her Majesty's Inspector