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Mr G Connolly
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Dear Mr Connolly

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 23 and 24 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, some of your staff, and students from Key Stages 3 and 4; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of three lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students' personal development is outstanding. They are extremely confident, welcoming, thoughtful and caring. They are highly reflective and express their views very sincerely and clearly. They listen to the opinions of others attentively.
- Students have a good knowledge of how to stay healthy and an accurate understanding of a balanced diet and the need for exercise.

- Students have a good knowledge and understanding of the effects and dangers of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. They know how to stay safe, both in the school and outside. However, their skills such as resisting peer-group pressure, assessing and managing risks, and making decisions are less well developed.
- Students are making good progress in learning how to manage their money and older students understand how to use credit cards responsibly, the implications of getting a mortgage and how to use a bank account. Throughout the school, students are prepared well for the next stage of their education and their future adult life.
- Students' knowledge of the factual elements of sex and relationships education is good and they have developed responsible attitudes to the subject. However, their understanding of the changing nature of relationships between young men and women is less well developed.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Relationships between teachers and students are very caring, positive and purposeful, so students are extremely well behaved.
- Teachers work effectively in partnership with visitors and the Chaplain to make most lessons, on the days when PSHE education is taught, exciting and memorable.
- When PSHE education is being taught through other subjects, there are some good opportunities for students to apply their knowledge. For example, in a Year 11 history lesson, students were using their knowledge of the effects of alcohol to discuss the arguments for and against prohibition in the USA.
- There is some variation in the quality of lessons. Some teachers' subject knowledge is insecure so the lessons they teach are less interesting and valuable for students.
- Teaching provides very good support and guidance. The excellent assembly observed contributed well to students' personal development, providing opportunities for students to understand and reflect on relating to and caring for others.
- Assessment is at an early stage of development, so it does not show how well students are progressing.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE education curriculum is satisfactory.

- The curriculum is enriched well by interesting and varied activities provided on PSHE education days. These cover a wide range of topics and include areas such as cyber bullying, street violence and safety on public

transport. Events make good use of a wide range of visitors and outside agencies.

- Enterprise, financial capability provision and careers education make a good contribution to students' economic well-being and their future opportunities in later life.
- There has been good consultation with students to make PSHE education more relevant to their needs. The impact of this could be seen in changes to sex and relationships lessons, which have been planned in response to students' views.
- The lack of discrete lessons other than PSHE days means that provision in areas such as skills development and the relationships aspect of sex and relationships education is less effective because learning is fragmented and there is too much time between sessions.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are satisfactory.

- There is a clear vision for the subject and a good understanding of the importance of active learning within the teaching of PSHE education. However, this has not been translated into an improvement plan for the subject.
- The PSHE education days have been organised well and successfully help students to make progress in their knowledge and understanding.
- Monitoring of PSHE education is in place, but it does not yet give a clear picture of the quality of provision.
- Although there is an overview of the topics taught, there are no schemes of work that indicate what students are expected to be able to do in different year groups.

Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- Students feel extremely safe and know they are very well cared for.
- In other subjects, students learn how to use potentially dangerous equipment in a safe way, for example sharp tools in food technology or art and design.
- Students are less secure in the development of their skills, such as being able to resist peer-group pressure.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- reviewing the current organisation of the curriculum to ensure progression
- developing more assessment tasks for PSHE education.

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

Susan Orpin
Additional Inspector