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Mrs S Willman  
Headteacher  
Therfield School  
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Dear Mrs Willman

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 11 March 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, students from Key Stages 3, 4 and the sixth form; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of four lessons and a tutor period.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is outstanding.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is outstanding.

- Students are extremely confident, articulate and thoughtful. They value opportunities to express their views freely at school and they listen carefully to the opinions of others. They view discussion as a chance to learn.
- Students have a thorough understanding of how to stay healthy, and clearly know the meaning of a balanced diet and the importance of exercise.

- Students have a very good understanding of the effects and dangers of drugs, including alcohol and tobacco. They have learned how to resist peer-group pressure and are highly skilled in assessing and managing risks. Students are very aware of the need to make informed decisions about their personal safety, which they take very seriously.
- Students are making very good progress in learning how to manage their money and sixth-form students are well informed about how to tackle possible financial problems in the future. Throughout the school, students are supported thoroughly to make transitions and are prepared very well for the next stage of their education and future adult life.
- Students have a very good understanding of sex and relationships, so they are extremely well placed to make sensible and safe decisions in their future lives. They have a very clear understanding of the changing nature of relationships between young men and women.

### Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is good.

- Relationships between teachers and students are trusting, purposeful and open, so students are keen to learn. Students are supported well through advice and guidance.
- Lessons are relevant and interesting so students enjoy PSHE education. Lessons are planned well and provide many opportunities for students to discuss and think about issues that may affect them now, or in the future.
- Teachers' increasing confidence in the subject is reflected in their ability to make learning interesting through a varied range of activities.
- When PSHE education is being taught through other subjects, there are some good opportunities for students to apply their knowledge. For example, this was observed in a Year 11 textiles lesson where students were evaluating different female body shapes and becoming aware of the influences on their perceptions. However, in some other lessons, the contribution was more limited because the teacher's understanding of PSHE education was less well developed.
- Assessment has developed well and is used consistently by teachers to judge how well individual students are doing and provide guidance on how they can improve. Students are also able to assess themselves. However, assessment does not provide enough information to show students' progress over time to evaluate the success of provision.

### Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The PSHE curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum has been designed carefully through extensive consultation with students and their parents, and meets students' needs very well. Detailed planning ensures that the work learned becomes progressively more difficult, ensuring that all students are suitably challenged.

- The curriculum is enriched extremely well by a wide range of visitors, clubs and trips, including an ex-student of the school who appeared on television in *The Apprentice*, opportunities through the Duke of Edinburgh Award Scheme and a variety of sports clubs.
- PSHE education lessons are supported well by other experiences, such as activity days, 'Thought for the week' in tutor time, assemblies and the contribution of other subjects.
- Enterprise, financial capability provision and careers education make a very good contribution to students' economic well-being and their opportunities in later life.

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

The leadership and management of PSHE education are outstanding.

- There is a very clear vision for the subject and decisions are informed very well by training and advice, making the very best use of resources and leaders' expertise.
- Very good, comprehensive schemes of work are in place that support teachers' development and help to monitor the subject.
- Training is used effectively to support teachers to develop their skills, particularly in sex and relationships education. There are very good links with local agencies to help develop the programme and teachers' expertise.
- Teaching is monitored rigorously and support is provided in those few instances where it is needed.
- All students, including the most vulnerable, are supported to learn very well.

#### Subject issue: learning to stay safe

- Students are taught to be safe extremely well, both in and out of school.
- Students have expert tuition to help them learn how to use potentially dangerous equipment, for example, in physical education and science.
- Students benefit from a very wide range of opportunities to practise using their skills in staying safe, for example, through role-play in the classroom and real opportunities on trips outside school.
- Students benefit from good opportunities to learn about health and safety in the workplace, and are able to put this into practice on work experience.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- developing teachers' expertise to ensure a more consistent approach to the subject.

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