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Mr D Green
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Green

Ofsted 2010–11 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 13 July 2010 to look at work in PSHE education.

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 without their consent.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff, two groups of students from Year 10 and Year 12 and a parent governor; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of five PSHE lessons and an assembly.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Students have a good knowledge of drugs education and the effects of drugs and alcohol on their bodies. Their knowledge of sex and relationships is satisfactory and good in the sixth form.
- Students develop confidence and self-esteem through the very good range of leadership opportunities provided in all year groups, such as sports leaders, mentors, leading assemblies and using their learning to teach younger students.
- Vulnerable students achieve well as a result of the comprehensive systems that are in place to help them overcome major challenges in their lives

- Students' social skills are satisfactory and good in the sixth form. In more formal settings, students from all backgrounds are able to communicate clearly and convincingly.

Quality of teaching of PSHE education

The quality of teaching of PSHE education is satisfactory with some good features.

- All teachers, specialists and non-specialists, prepare thoroughly for PSHE lessons and use a range of resources, such as DVDs and newspaper articles, to stimulate discussion and debate.
- In the best lessons, teachers' questions are challenging and probing. This is not the case in all lessons because some learning objectives are not clear enough to allow this to happen.
- The pace of teaching is brisk. Regular reviews in lessons check for understanding but sometimes miss the opportunity to involve all students or probe for deeper learning.
- Assessment is regular, useful and consistent. Books are marked frequently and areas for improvement are identified as a result.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the PSHE curriculum is good.

- The PSHE curriculum permeates many areas of the school and develops students' ability to take their place in society with confidence.
- Significant leadership opportunities are provided throughout the school and are key to the impact of the PSHE curriculum. For example, in the Year 9 'Real Life Learning' project where students teach younger students what they have learned; through the wide range of mentoring activities; and the involvement of all students in sports leadership.
- The revisiting of important PSHE issues each year ensures that students' knowledge and understanding develop alongside their maturity.
- Although the PSHE scheme of work is well mapped across the school, it does not take full account of the wider PSHE opportunities provided.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The leadership and management of PSHE education are good.

- The PSHE subject leader has good subject knowledge, supports colleagues well and monitors the quality of teaching and learning regularly.
- The school has an accurate view of the effectiveness of PSHE. The departmental action plan clearly identifies priorities for improvement, although some could be expressed with more measurable success criteria.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that all lessons have clear learning objectives so that teachers' questions can challenge all students to think more deeply
- ensuring that the PSHE scheme of work is coordinated with other PSHE opportunities across the school.

I hope that 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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector