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Mr R Bell
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Bell

Ofsted 2011–12 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 21 September 2011 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 senior staff, the PSHE subject leader and other staff with responsibility for aspects of PSHE education, two groups of students and two parents; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of three lessons and two mixed-age tutor group sessions.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is good.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is good.

- Older students have a good knowledge of sex and relationships, and drugs and alcohol education. They use their knowledge to inform lifestyle choices.
- They develop good personal skills and are able to talk at length to visitors, other adults and their peers.
- A good range of leadership opportunities is provided through various opportunities such as: junior sports leaders, arts initiatives linked to the school's specialist status and other opportunities within tutor groups.

- Students whose circumstances make them vulnerable make exceptional progress in their personal and social skills due to the individual support they and their families receive.
- Younger students have a less secure knowledge of drugs, and sex and relationships education due to its position in the scheme of work.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching in the mixed-age tutor sessions is good. Teachers know the students well, plan thoroughly and use stimulating resources to challenge and engage all students.
- Good leadership opportunities and discussion are encouraged in the tutorial sessions.
- Learning objectives in some of the timetabled lessons are too broad and complicated for all students to access and make sufficient progress.
- In some lessons, opportunities for ongoing assessment are missed.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- The curriculum permeates many aspects of the school's work including tutor time, after-school opportunities in and out of school and the development of self-esteem through students taking on leadership roles.
- The curriculum includes visits from a wide range of external agencies including theatre companies; specialists in alcohol abuse; and sex and relationships advice. These professionals support and extend students' knowledge and understanding.
- A wide range of resources supports the curriculum and stimulates students to consider attitudes and values. For example: video clips; still images; electronic babies; and resuscitation equipment.
- The scheme of work is detailed and mapped across the school, including opportunities for focused work off timetable for a whole day. However, sex and relationships, and drugs and alcohol education does not feature early enough in the Key Stage 3 programme.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education is good.

- Leadership is outstanding. Schemes of work are clear and thorough and future plans are in place to ensure their full and consistent delivery.
- Opportunities are provided for the subject leader to monitor curriculum delivery and support staff when required.
- Clear plans are in place to train all staff to deliver effective lessons.

- PSHE education has a high profile in the school and is well-supported by senior managers.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that sex and relationships, and drugs and alcohol education appears earlier in the Key Stage 3 scheme of work
- ensuring that all lessons have clear and measurable learning objectives
- ensuring that the extent of learning is checked more frequently in lessons.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop PSHE education in the school.

As explained previously, a copy of this letter will be published on the Ofsted website. It may be used to inform decisions about any future inspection. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Clive Kempton
Her Majesty's Inspector