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18 January 2012

Mr B Slade
Principal
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Dear Mr Slade

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: personal, social, health and economic education (PSHE education)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 11 and 12 January 2012 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 and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of nine lessons and two assemblies.

The overall effectiveness of PSHE education is satisfactory.

Achievement in PSHE education

Achievement in PSHE education is satisfactory.

- Students have a good understanding of how to keep themselves safe in a range of situations. This includes internet and personal safety. Older students have a secure knowledge of the effects of the misuse of drugs and the dangers of smoking and alcohol. They develop clear strategies on minimising risks.
- Students have a good knowledge about how to be healthy and can choose the right food that will provide a balanced diet. They engage enthusiastically in sport and in particular the annual sports day.

- Students have a satisfactory understanding of sexual development, contraception and sexually transmitted infections. They have many opportunities to explore the different types of relationships. While students have a solid understanding of mental health problems, such as stress, they have a limited awareness of eating disorders.
- Students make satisfactory progress in developing understanding of enterprise and money management. Achievement on the qualification Preparation for Working Life is good. At present, learning is not consolidated as well as it could be and students lack confidence in their knowledge.
- Personal development is good and students are friendly, polite and well behaved. They listen to each other well, developing confidence in group and discussion activity. Students demonstrate some level of independence.

Quality of teaching in PSHE education

The quality of teaching in PSHE education is good.

- Lessons are characterised by good relationships and strong classroom management. Teachers' planning is detailed and consistent across the school. They create a safe and secure environment to discuss sensitive and controversial issues. Students' show positive attitudes towards the subject.
- Discussion and questioning are a feature of teaching and learning, although not all students have the opportunity to fully participate and develop their skills of communication. In a minority of lessons, teachers dominate and lead the discussion for too long.
- A good range of high-quality resources, which include DVD materials and discussion-based scenarios, is used effectively to engage students' interest. There is a good focus on the development of key words and terminology and frequent checks on what students have learnt and how they could improve. Students apply their learning and knowledge by responding to case studies or reviewing their own performance.
- The best lessons include a high level of challenge. Teachers plan these lessons to meet the needs of different students, in particular, by ensuring that support or appropriate materials are available to help students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to learn.
- Assessment opportunities are increasingly being built into lesson plans but they are not consistently used to judge progress against the end of key stage statements.

Quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

The quality of the curriculum in PSHE education is good.

- The curriculum is broad and permeates many aspects of the school's work from discrete teaching to cross-curriculum coverage. Recent improvements are ensuring that the schemes of work are updated and detailed. Good links exist with other subjects, such as food technology and physical education, and students have ample curriculum time.

- Good enrichment is provided by external agencies such as the Fire Service, drama companies and speakers. This provides for a lively and exciting curriculum. Students are given many opportunities to develop leadership skills. These include the sport ambassadors and the Student Voice Council.
- Well-structured assemblies complement the PSHE programme and reinforce key messages on cyber-bullying and risk-taking. Older students benefit from a clear programme of careers and planning for the future.
- Students and teachers have been engaged in influencing the content of the curriculum. This has led to the recent improvements and changes.
- Provision for students whose circumstances make them vulnerable are good with the Step Up programme. This is having an impact on improving levels of attendance and behaviour.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PSHE education

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

- Leadership in the subject is driving forward significant improvements in a short space of time. Key changes have taken place this academic year to improve the planning, delivery and coherence of the subject. This is starting to have an impact on achievement.
- The subject has a high profile in the school and non-specialist teachers receive good support and guidance. Students and teachers comment on the improved quality of materials. Sharing of good practice is starting to develop.
- An accurate understanding of the strengths of the subject informs priorities for improvement. Although there are high levels of commitment and a clear sense of direction, these are not well focused in the curriculum action plan.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- giving a greater focus on enterprise and money management
- monitoring and evaluating the quality of PSHE provision
- ensuring that assessment is rigorous and fully in place.

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

Davinder Dosanjh
Her Majesty's Inspector