

Ofsted grade descriptors for PSHE education

Inspectors visit 150 schools each year to inform Ofsted's subject surveys in English, mathematics and science. Survey visits for other subjects are less frequent but continue to take place from time to time.

Where applicable, subject feedback letters, which are sent following survey visits, normally contain separate judgements on:

- The achievement of pupils in PSHE education
- The quality of teaching in PSHE education
- The quality of the PSHE education curriculum
- The quality of leadership in, and management of, PSHE education

In coming to these judgements, inspectors will use the relevant criteria and grade descriptors from the 2015 School inspection handbook as they can be applied to individual subjects. Key elements of these descriptors are set out in the guidance below. Alongside them (for achievement, teaching, the curriculum and leadership and management) are supplementary, subject-specific descriptors which provide additional guidance for PSHE education. These descriptors should be applied in a way which is appropriate to the age of pupils involved. Except where otherwise indicated, descriptors are intended to be used on a 'best fit' basis.

Although your school may not experience an inspection which focuses on PSHE education specifically, these grade descriptors provide useful guidance on what Ofsted considers good practice in PSHE education. We have therefore prepared this summary of the changes and their implications for your practice.

Note: These descriptors should not be used as a checklist. They must be applied adopting a 'best fit' approach, which relies on the professional judgement of the inspection team. The exception is that teaching in modern languages must be outstanding for overall effectiveness to be outstanding.

Grade descriptors: the overall effectiveness of PSHE education provided in the school

<p>Outstanding (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Practice in PSHE education consistently reflects the highest aspirations for pupils and expectations of staff. Best practice is spread effectively in a drive for continuous improvement. Teaching in the subject is likely to be outstanding and together with a rich curriculum, which is highly relevant to pupils' needs, it contributes to outstanding learning and achievement or, in exceptional circumstances, achievement that is good and rapidly improving. Thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the subject enables them to thrive. Consequently, pupils and groups of pupils have excellent experiences in the subject, ensuring they are very well-equipped for the next stage of their education, training or employment. 	<p>Good (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective action is taken so that PSHE education enables most pupils to reach their potential. Pupils benefit from teaching that is at least good. This promotes very positive attitudes to learning and ensures that achievement in the subject is at least good. Leadership and management of the subject play a significant role and are good overall. Deliberate and effective action is taken to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. A positive climate for learning exists and pupils and groups of pupils have highly positive experiences in the subject so that they are well prepared for the next stage in their education, training or employment. 	<p>Requires improvement (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement, the quality of teaching and learning and leadership and management of PSHE education are all likely to be at least adequate with some significant good practice. Reasonable steps are taken to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. Pupils and groups of pupils have a generally positive experience in the subject and are not disadvantaged as they move to the next stage of their education, training or employment. 	<p>Inadequate (4)</p> <p>Overall effectiveness in PSHE education is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Achievement in PSHE education is inadequate. The behaviour and safety of pupils in PSHE education are inadequate. The quality of teaching in PSHE education is inadequate. The curriculum in PSHE education is inadequate. Leadership and management in PSHE education are inadequate. There are important weaknesses in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development resulting in a poor climate for learning in PSHE education where pupils or groups of pupils are unable to thrive.
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Grade descriptors: the achievement of pupils in PSHE education

<p>Outstanding (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils demonstrate exceptional independence; they think critically, articulate their learning and their views with great confidence and work constructively with others. • They consistently evaluate, discern and challenge their own and others' views using appropriate evidence from a range of sources. • Pupils show outstanding understanding of, and commitment to, their own and others' health and well-being. • Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability, have an excellent understanding of relationships, sexual development, sexual consent and their human rights with regard to physical harm and sexual exploitation. • They understand extremely well how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe and are very well aware of, for example, the dangers of substance misuse. • Pupils have a very strong understanding of how to recognise and deal with mental health problems such as stress or eating disorders • Pupils have developed discernment and resilience and know how to resist peer pressure effectively; they understand very well how to seek further help and advice if they need it. • All pupils understand very well the impact of bullying on others and actively challenge all forms of bullying including racist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic language. • Pupils make outstanding progress in developing understanding and skills in relation to business, enterprise, money management, the world of work and employability; they understand well the links with work on personal finance in National Curriculum citizenship lessons. 	<p>Good (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils demonstrate good levels of independence; they think critically, articulate their learning and views with confidence and work constructively with others. • They are able to evaluate, discern and challenge their own and others' views, using appropriate evidence from a range of sources. • Pupils understand well the factors associated with health and well-being. • Pupils, appropriate to their age and capability, have a good understanding of relationships, sexual development, sexual consent and their human rights with regard to physical harm and sexual exploitation. • They understand well how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe. They understand well the dangers of substance misuse, and how to recognise and deal with mental health problems such as stress or eating disorders. • Pupils are resilient and know how to resist peer pressure; they know how to seek further help and advice if they need it. • All understand the impact of bullying on others including racist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic language. • Pupils are making good progress in developing understanding and relevant skills in relation to business, enterprise, money management, the world of work and employability; they understand the links with work on personal finance in National Curriculum citizenship lessons. 	<p>Requires improvement (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils demonstrate some level of independence; they are able to communicate their views with growing confidence and work with others. • They are able to evaluate and challenge their own and others' views, using a range of sources, although sometimes such views may be based on limited evidence or not fully explained. • Pupils understand the factors associated with health and well-being appropriate to their age and capability. They have a satisfactory understanding of relationships, sexual development, sexual consent and respect. • They have an adequate understanding of how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe in relationships. • They understand the dangers of substance misuse and how to recognise and deal with mental health problems such as stress or eating disorders. • Pupils have begun to develop the skills of resilience; they are learning how to cope with peer pressure but do not always know where to go to seek further help and advice. • Most understand the impact of bullying on others including racist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic language. • Pupils, appropriate to their age, are making sound progress in developing understanding and relevant skills in relation to business, enterprise, money management, the world of work and employability although they may not understand the links with work on personal finance in National Curriculum citizenship lessons. 	<p>Inadequate (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Pupils rarely demonstrate independence or take initiative; they struggle to articulate their own and others' views. • Although they may know the factors associated with health and well-being, many do not appreciate their importance. • Appropriate to their age and capability, pupils have a limited understanding of relationships, sexual development, sexual consent and respect. • They are limited in their understanding of how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe in a relationship. • Although they may know about the dangers of substance misuse and how to recognise and deal with mental health problems such as stress or eating disorders, they do not appreciate the importance of the danger to their physical and mental health and/or do not know where to go to seek further help and advice. • Pupils do not appreciate the importance of dangers to their physical and mental health and/or do not know where to go to seek further help and advice. • Few appreciate the impact of bullying on others including racist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic language. They have made inadequate progress in developing understanding skills in relation to business, enterprise, money management, the world of work and employability and do not make links with the personal finance aspects of the National Curriculum citizenship programme.
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Grade descriptors: the quality of teaching in PSHE education

<p>Outstanding (1)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers demonstrate very high levels of confidence and expertise in their specialist knowledge and in their understanding of effective learning in PSHE education. Teachers understand how to apply clear and appropriate learning objectives that are matched by well-considered, appropriate activities. Pupils' interest and active participation are secured through teachers using a wide range of imaginative resources and strategies. This leads to rapid and sustained progress. The needs of all pupils, including the most able, are met through highly effective and responsive teaching. Teachers are confident and skilled in discussing sensitive and/or controversial issues. Effective discussion is a very strong feature; pupils are encouraged to investigate, express opinions and listen to others. Consequently they develop excellent critical skills, can evaluate information well and make informed judgments. Teachers are able to develop pupils' resilience and ability to resist peer pressure very effectively; they help develop pupils' confidence well and strengthen their attitudes to learning across the school curriculum. Teachers communicate very high expectations, enthusiasm and passion for PSHE education. They know how well their pupils are achieving, build on their previous knowledge and provide effective feedback to help them to improve further. Teachers ensure that pupils have their attainment and progress recognised across all aspects of knowledge and skills development in PSHE education. 	<p>Good (2)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers demonstrate confidence and expertise in their specialist knowledge and in their understanding of effective learning in PSHE education. Good progress is secured across all aspects of PSHE education because teachers understand how to apply appropriate learning objectives and outcomes and to use a good range of resources and strategies to stimulate pupils' interest and active participation. The needs of all pupils, including the most able are met through effective teaching. . Teachers are confident and skilled in discussing sensitive and/or controversial issues. Discussion is a strong feature; pupils are encouraged to investigate, express opinions and listen to others. Consequently, pupils are developing critical skills and learning how to evaluate information and make informed judgments. Teachers are able to develop pupils' resilience, their ability to resist peer pressure, and their confidence; and strengthen their attitudes to learning across the school curriculum. Teachers communicate high expectations and enthusiasm for PSHE education. They know how well their pupils are achieving, are able to help them improve, and ensure that pupils have their attainment and progress in PSHE recognised. 	<p>Requires improvement (3)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of effective learning in PSHE education. Sound progress is secured in most areas of PSHE education, although there may be some weaknesses, due to teachers using a range of resources and strategies to stimulate pupils' interest. Teachers monitor pupils' prior knowledge and understanding but not always frequently or rigorously enough, resulting in in some unnecessary repetition of work and/or lack of challenge. Teachers are confident in discussing sensitive and/or controversial issues but do not always adhere to clear and consistent ground rules to ensure emotional safety for everyone in the class. Discussion is a feature of teaching and learning, although not all pupils have the opportunity to fully participate and help develop their skills of articulation, advocacy and communication. Teachers plan lessons aimed at developing pupils' resilience and ability to resist peer pressure although not all develop the assertiveness skills required to apply their learning in real life. Teachers know how well their pupils are achieving in lessons and provide encouraging verbal feedback. However, they do not always provide feedback on how to improve or consistently and formally identify attainment and progress in PSHE education. 	<p>Inadequate (4)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Teachers demonstrate a poor understanding of effective learning in PSHE education. Lessons objectives are unclear and/or inappropriate and teaching fails to stimulate pupils' interest. As a result, progress is inadequate in most aspects. Teachers rarely monitor pupils' prior knowledge and understanding, resulting in low expectations and learning activities that are not sufficiently well matched to needs, particularly for the most able. Teachers avoid discussing sensitive and controversial issues or do so inappropriately so that they are unable to ensure the emotional safety of the class. Teachers fail to develop pupils' resilience and ability to resist peer pressure; pupils have not developed the confidence and assertiveness skills they need to keep themselves safe. There are too few opportunities for independent learning and discussion fails to develop pupils' skills of judgment, articulation and communication. Assessment of pupils' attainment and progress in PSHE education does not inform teachers' planning.
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Grade descriptors: the quality of the curriculum in PSHE education

Outstanding (1)	Good (2)	Requires improvement (3)	Inadequate (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The imaginative and stimulating PSHE education curriculum is skilfully designed, taking into account local health and social data and the full range of pupils' needs, interests and aspirations. The programme ensures highly effective continuity and progression in pupils' learning across all key stages. The programme is explicit, comprehensive and coherent and the statutory elements of sex and relationships education (SRE) are fully met. The aspects of the programme relating to business, enterprise and money management link very well with the personal finance aspects of the National Curriculum citizenship programme. The programme for personal well-being is very highly regarded by pupils and enables them to lead safe and healthy lives. The curriculum provides a very strong platform for pupils' future economic well-being. The school and wider community provide high-quality and wide-ranging enrichment activities for pupils to apply and extend their social and personal skills. Where suspended timetable days are used they complement the PSHE education programme extremely well because they are based on accurate understanding of pupils' needs, informed by clear and appropriate learning objectives and are well-evaluated to inform curriculum planning. Pupils and teachers are fully engaged in influencing the content and evaluating the quality of the curriculum. The subject makes an outstanding and sustained contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and reinforces well a range of personal and thinking skills. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PSHE education curriculum is well designed to match the range of pupils' needs, interests and aspirations and to ensure effective continuity and progression in their learning across all key stages. The programme is comprehensive and coherent, and statutory elements of SRE are fully met. The aspects of the programme relating to business, enterprise and money management link with the personal finance aspects of the National Curriculum citizenship programme. The programme for personal well-being enables pupils to lead safe and healthy lives. The curriculum provides a strong platform for pupils' future economic well-being. Local data is taken into account when planning and the school and wider community provide a range of opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their social and personal skills. Where suspended timetable days are used, they complement the PSHE education programme well because they are informed by clear and appropriate learning objectives and evaluation of the learning informs future curriculum planning. Pupils and/or teachers are engaged in influencing the content and evaluating the quality of the curriculum. The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and reinforces a range of personal and thinking skills. 	<p>The PSHE curriculum is generally matched to pupils' needs and ensures continuity and progression in their learning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Statutory elements of SRE are fully met although some elements of the non-statutory programme may be superficial. The aspects of the programme relating to business, enterprise and money management do not link sufficiently well with the personal finance aspects of the National Curriculum citizenship programme. The programme for personal well-being enables pupils to lead adequately safe and healthy lives; and the curriculum provides an opportunity to assist pupils' future economic well-being. The school and wider community provide a range of opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their social and personal skills although these are not accessed by all pupils. Where suspended timetable days are used, they have clear learning objectives but learning outcomes are not always evaluated or used to inform curriculum planning. Pupils and/or teachers are sometimes engaged in influencing the content and evaluating the quality of the curriculum. The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The PSHE education curriculum does not enable progression in learning and fails to meet the needs of all pupils. The programme for personal well-being is insufficiently coherent to enable pupils to lead adequately safe and healthy lives, and/or provides an inadequate platform for pupils' future economic well-being. The statutory elements of SRE are not fully met. The school and wider community provide too few opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their social and personal skills. Where suspended timetable days are used, they do not support a comprehensive and coherent entitlement for pupils; the planning lacks coherence and learning is not evaluated. Pupils and/or teachers are rarely engaged in influencing the content and evaluating the quality of the curriculum. The subject makes an inadequate contribution to aspects of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.

Grade descriptors: quality of leadership and management of PSHE education

Outstanding (1)	Good (2)	Requires improvement (3)	Inadequate (4)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership is informed by a high level of PSHE education expertise and vision. • The subject is very well resourced in terms of curriculum time, staff training, management time and the use of external services and materials. • There is an excellent track record of innovation. • Statutory requirements in SRE are fully met. • The monitoring of teaching and learning in PSHE is rigorous; subject reviews, self-evaluation and improvement planning are well-informed by current best practice. • Subject leadership inspires confidence and a whole-hearted commitment from pupils and staff. There are highly effective strategies to share good practice and secure high-quality professional development. • PSHE has a very high profile in the life of the school and is at the forefront of whole-school initiatives. • Highly effective strategies to promote inclusion ensure that all pupils engage fully in activities to promote their personal and social development. • Discrimination, including prejudiced-based bullying and discriminatory language, is tackled with vigour. • Very strong links exist with partner schools, parents, carers and external agencies to reinforce the very high standard of PSHE education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership is well informed about the characteristics of best practice in PSHE education. • The subject is well-resourced in terms of curriculum time, staff training, management time and the use of external services and materials. • There is a good track record of innovation. • Statutory requirements in SRE are fully met. • Teaching and learning in PSHE education are monitored well through observation and review which informs effective self-evaluation and improvement planning. • Subject leadership inspires confidence from pupils and staff. • There are effective strategies to share good practice and secure appropriate professional development. • PSHE has a high profile in the life of the school. • Discrimination, including prejudiced-based bullying is tackled well. • Good links exist with partner schools, parents, carers and external agencies to reinforce the high standard of PSHE education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership is aware of current developments in PSHE education and incorporates these within its practice. • Statutory requirements in SRE are met. • Subject leadership inspires confidence from pupils and staff. • Provision for PSHE education is monitored and reviewed regularly and there is a sound understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement. • There is some sharing of good practice, with modest access to subject-specific professional development. • Strategies to promote inclusion are in place but do not always secure the active engagement of all groups of pupils. • Equality is promoted and discrimination, including prejudiced-based bullying, is tackled. • Links exist with partner schools, parents, carers and external agencies to reinforce an adequate standard of PSHE education. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Leadership is not well informed of current developments in PSHE education. • Statutory requirements for SRE are not met. • Provision for PSHE education is not regularly monitored or reviewed. • Self-evaluation is weak and is not informed by subject review or understanding of good practice in PSHE education. • Opportunities for professional development in the subject are limited and, as a result, some staff lack the confidence and expertise to deliver it effectively. • Opportunities to engage in activities to promote their personal and social development are not taken up by particular groups of pupils. • Bullying, including the use of prejudiced-based language is not consistently or effectively tackled. • PSHE education has a low profile in the school.