

Using the Ofsted supplementary specific guidance to inform PSHE education departmental review - January 2014

In December 2013 Ofsted updated its supplementary subject specific guidance and grade descriptors for PSHE education. [Click here to download.](#)

These 'subject survey visits' supplement the generic 'Section 5' school inspection framework and reframe the generic grade descriptors, describing how they apply to particular subjects. In addition to providing a judgement for an individual school, these inspections enable Ofsted to nationally survey the quality of teaching in individual subjects.

Inspectors will gather evidence by considering schemes of work, individual lesson plans, assessment and progress data, talking with pupils and observing lessons. Key questions Ofsted will ask are: What is the quality of provision? What impact is this provision having on pupils and how do we know?

Inspectors will make their final judgement by reflecting on the evidence they gather against the descriptions in the framework below.

While the descriptors are not intended to act as a checklist, and need to be interpreted in the context of an individual school or key stage, the framework offers PSHE education coordinators a powerful tool for a departmental review. This is important because a further question Ofsted asks is: How well does this school know itself?

There are several critical questions PSHE leads might ask of themselves;

1 If we were to self-inspect:

- the achievement of our pupils in PSHE education
- the quality of teaching in PSHE education
- the quality of the curriculum in PSHE education
- the quality of leadership and management in PSHE education
- the overall effectiveness of PSHE education provided in the school

using the framework below, which descriptors best reflect our pupils and our practice? How do we know?

2 Can we provide enough evidence to convince others that our own judgements are legitimate?

3 If we want to move our pupils' performance or our own practice to reflect a higher-grade descriptor (or to maintain an outstanding grade descriptor) what do we need to do differently (or ensure we retain)?

The following tables set out the Ofsted grade descriptors used in their inspections, reformatted into a developmental framework to make them easier to use for departmental review and development.

Grade descriptors:¹ achievement of pupils in PSHE education

Inadequate	Need to improve (<i>previously Satisfactory</i>)	Good	Outstanding
Pupils rarely demonstrate independence or take initiative; they struggle to articulate their own and others' views.	Pupils demonstrate some level of independence; they are able to communicate their views with growing confidence and work with others.	Pupils demonstrate good levels of independence; they think critically, articulate their learning and views with confidence, and work constructively with others.	Pupils demonstrate exceptional independence; they think critically, articulate their learning and their views with great confidence, and work constructively with others.
	They are able to evaluate and challenge their own and others' views, using a range of sources, although sometimes these views may be based on limited evidence or not fully explained.	They are able to evaluate, discern and challenge their own and others' views, using appropriate evidence from a range of sources.	They consistently evaluate, discern and challenge their own and others' views using appropriate evidence from a range of sources.
Although they may know the factors associated with health and wellbeing, many do not appreciate their importance.	Pupils understand the factors associated with health and wellbeing, appropriate to their age and capability.	Pupils understand well the factors associated with health and wellbeing.	Pupils show outstanding understanding of, and commitment to, their own and others' health and wellbeing.
Appropriate to their age and capability, pupils have a limited understanding of relationships, sexual development, sexual consent and respect.	They have an adequate understanding of relationships, sexual development, sexual consent and respect.	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.	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.

¹ 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 inspector.

Pupils are limited in their understanding of how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe in a relationship.	They have an adequate understanding of how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe in relationships.	They understand well how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe.	They understand extremely well how to keep themselves and others healthy and safe.
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 understand the dangers of substance misuse. Pupils know how to recognise and deal with mental health problems such as stress or eating disorders.	They understand well the dangers of substance misuse. Pupils know how to recognise and deal with mental health problems such as stress or eating disorders.	Pupils are very well aware of 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 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.	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.	Pupils are resilient and know how to resist peer pressure; they know how to seek further help and advice if they need it.	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.
Few appreciate the impact of bullying on others, including racist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic language.	Most understand the impact of bullying on others, including racist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic language.	All understand the impact of bullying on others including racist, disablist, homophobic and transphobic language.	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.
They have made inadequate progress in developing understanding and 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.	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.	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.	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.

Grade descriptors:² the quality of teaching in PSHE education³

Teachers demonstrate a poor understanding of effective learning in PSHE education.	Teachers demonstrate a sound understanding of effective learning in PSHE education.	Teachers demonstrate confidence and expertise in their specialist knowledge and in their understanding of effective learning in PSHE education.	Teachers demonstrate very high levels of confidence and expertise in their specialist knowledge and in their 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.	Sound progress is secured in most areas of PSHE education, although there may be some weaknesses, due to teachers not using a range of resources and strategies to stimulate pupils' interest.	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.	Teachers understand how to apply clear and appropriate learning objectives that are matched by well-considered, appropriate activities. Pupils' interest and active participation is secured through teachers using a wide range of imaginative resources and strategies. This leads to rapid and sustained progress.
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.	Teacher's monitor pupils' prior knowledge and understanding but is not always frequently or rigorously enough, resulting in some unnecessary repetition of work and/or lack of challenge.	The needs of all pupils, including the most able, are met through effective teaching.	The needs of all pupils, including the most able, are met through highly effective and responsive teaching.

² 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 inspector.

³ These grade descriptors describe the quality of teaching in the subject taking account of evidence over time. While they include some characteristics of individual lessons, they are not designed to be used to judge individual lessons.

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 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.	Teachers are confident and skilled in discussing sensitive and/or controversial issues.	Teachers are confident and skilled in discussing sensitive and/or controversial issues.
There are too few opportunities for independent learning, and discussion fails to develop pupils' skills of judgement, articulation and communication.	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.	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 judgements.	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 judgements.
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.	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 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 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 high expectations and enthusiasm for PSHE education.	Teachers communicate very high expectations, enthusiasm and passion for PSHE education.
	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.	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.	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.

Grade descriptors: the quality of the curriculum in PSHE education⁴

The PSHE education curriculum does not enable progression in learning and fails to meet the needs of all pupils.	The PSHE curriculum is generally matched to pupils' needs and ensures continuity and progression in their learning.	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 imaginative and stimulating PSHE education curriculum is skilfully designed, taking into account local health and social data 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 statutory elements of sex and relationships education (SRE) are not fully met.	Statutory elements of SRE are fully met, although some elements of the non-statutory programme may be superficial.	The programme is comprehensive and coherent, and statutory elements of SRE are fully met.	The programme is explicit, comprehensive and coherent and the statutory elements of SRE are fully met.
	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 aspects of the programme relating to business, enterprise and money management link with the personal finance aspects of the National Curriculum citizenship programme.	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 wellbeing is insufficiently coherent to enable pupils to lead adequately safe and healthy lives,	The programme for personal wellbeing enables pupils to lead adequately safe and healthy lives.	The programme for personal wellbeing enables pupils to lead safe and healthy lives.	The programme for personal wellbeing is very highly regarded by pupils and enables them to lead safe and healthy lives.
The programme provides an inadequate platform for pupils' future economic well-being.	The curriculum provides an opportunity to assist pupils' future economic wellbeing.	The curriculum provides a strong platform for pupils' future economic wellbeing.	The curriculum provides a very strong platform for pupils' future economic wellbeing.

⁴ 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 inspector.

The school and wider community provide too few opportunities for pupils to apply and extend their social and personal skills.	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.	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	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 do not support a comprehensive and coherent entitlement for pupils; the planning lacks coherence and learning is not evaluated.	Where suspended timetable days are used, they have clear learning objectives but learning outcomes are not always evaluated or used to inform curriculum planning.	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.	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/or teachers are rarely engaged in influencing the content or evaluating the quality of the curriculum.	Pupils and/or teachers are sometimes engaged in influencing the content and evaluating the quality of the curriculum.	Pupils and/or teachers are engaged in influencing the content and evaluating the quality of the curriculum.	Pupils and teachers are fully 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.	The subject makes a satisfactory contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	The subject makes a good contribution to pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development and reinforces a range of personal and thinking skills.	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.

Grade descriptors:⁵ quality of leadership and management of PSHE education

Leadership is not well informed of current developments in PSHE education.	Leadership is aware of current developments in PSHE education and incorporates these within its practice.	Leadership is well informed about the characteristics of best practice in PSHE education.	Leadership is informed by a high level of PSHE education expertise and vision.
		The subject is well resourced in terms of curriculum time, staff training, management time and the use of external services and materials.	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 a good track record of innovation.	There is an excellent track record of innovation.
Statutory requirements for SRE are not met.	Statutory requirements in SRE are met.	Statutory requirements in SRE are fully met.	Statutory requirements in SRE are fully 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.	Provision for PSHE education is monitored and reviewed regularly and there is a sound understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement.	Teaching and learning in PSHE education are monitored well through observation and review, which informs effective self-evaluation and improvement planning.	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 from pupils and staff.	Subject leadership inspires confidence from pupils and staff.	Subject leadership inspires confidence and a wholehearted commitment from pupils and staff.
Opportunities for professional development in the subject are limited and, as a result, some staff lack the confidence and expertise to deliver it effectively.	There is some sharing of good practice, with modest access to subject-specific professional development.	There are effective strategies to share good practice and secure appropriate professional development.	There are highly effective strategies to share good practice and secure high-quality professional development.

⁵ 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 inspector.

PSHE education has a low profile in the school.		PSHE has a high profile in the life of the school.	PSHE has a very high profile in the life of the school and is at the forefront of whole school initiatives.
Opportunities to engage in activities to promote their personal and social development are not taken up by particular groups of pupils.	Strategies to promote inclusion are in place but do not always secure the active engagement of all groups of pupils.		Highly effective strategies to promote inclusion ensure that all pupils engage fully in activities to promote their personal and social development.
Bullying, including the use of prejudice-based language is not consistently or effectively tackled.	Equality is promoted and discrimination, including prejudice-based bullying, is tackled.	Discrimination, including prejudice-based bullying is tackled well.	Discrimination, including prejudice-based bullying and discriminatory language, is tackled with vigour.
	Links exist with partner schools, parents, carers and external agencies to reinforce an adequate standard of PSHE education.	Good links exist with partner schools, parents, carers and external agencies to reinforce the high standard of PSHE education.	Very strong links exist with partner schools, parents, carers and external agencies to reinforce the very high standard of PSHE education.

Grade descriptors:⁶ the overall effectiveness of PSHE education provided in the school

Overall effectiveness in PSHE education is likely to be inadequate if any of the following apply;		Effective action is taken so that PSHE education enables most pupils to reach their potential.	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.
The quality of teaching in PSHE education is inadequate.		Pupils benefit from teaching that is at least good.	Teaching in the subject is likely to be outstanding.
Achievement in PSHE education is inadequate. Leadership and management in PSHE education are inadequate.	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.	Teaching 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.	Together with a rich curriculum, which is highly relevant to pupils' needs, teaching contributes to outstanding learning and achievement or, in exceptional circumstances, achievement that is good and rapidly improving.
There are important weaknesses in the promotion of pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	Reasonable steps are taken to promote pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	Deliberate and effective action is taken to promote the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development.	Thoughtful and wide-ranging promotion of the pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development in the subject enables them to thrive.
These weaknesses result in a poor climate for learning in PSHE education where pupils or groups of pupils are unable to thrive.	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.	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.	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.

All text in this framework is taken from 'Generic grade descriptors and supplementary subject-specific guidance for inspectors on making judgements during subject survey visits to schools'– Personal, social, health and economic education, Ofsted, December 2013.

⁶ 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.