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Mr S Elliott
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Elliott

Ofsted 2011–12 subject survey inspection programme: physical education (PE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 22 and 23 September 2011 to look at work in PE.

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 and the subject leader; meetings with two groups of students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is satisfactory.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- The school's data show that students' attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is broadly average. Excellent new facilities have helped to re-engage and enthuse students; participation rates are very high and the vast majority make at least satisfactory progress in lessons. Boys and girls make good progress in games and fitness lessons because teachers demonstrate effectively what they have to do and give them extended periods of time to practise new skills.
- The percentage of students in Key Stage 4 attaining an A* to C grade in GCSE PE increased significantly this year but it remains below the national average. Increasing numbers of students study the full or short-course award and almost all of them attain a qualification by the end of Year 11.

Achievement in other PE lessons in Key Stage 4 is not regularly assessed, so it is not possible to determine how well students are progressing throughout Years 10 and 11.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is satisfactory.

- The quality of teaching is at least satisfactory overall but it is inconsistent. It is good when tasks are matched to students' abilities and when they are given opportunities to learn new skills stage by stage, coupled with regular guidance and praise from staff. For example, a group of Year 7 boys unfamiliar with rugby were shown how to pass the ball backwards while moving forwards, and given ample time to practise in teams to consolidate their learning. In a fitness lesson, Year 9 boys and girls worked independently to design their own training circuit and were able to explain it to others.
- Teaching is less effective when teachers talk for too long, which limits opportunities for students to lead their own learning. In some lessons, all students do the same tasks regardless of their abilities, so more-able students are not sufficiently challenged. Teaching of GCSE theory is too variable. Some lessons include a wide range of techniques to interest and stimulate learners, but elsewhere students are 'spoon-fed' knowledge which restricts their progress. Very few teachers make regular use of information and communication technology to enhance students' learning.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is good.

- Students in Key Stage 3 receive a broad, balanced curriculum including swimming at an off-site pool. PE is taught in two 50-minute lessons each week which is less than the recommended time for PE. However, an additional teacher is allocated to each lesson to provide students with more contact time with staff to help them learn. The vast majority of students exceed two hours of PE and sport each week by participating in a wide range of sports enrichment activities before, during and after school. Athletic activities taught off-site are ineffective because too much lesson time is spent travelling to and from the venue.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum is taught from Year 9 onwards. It is increasingly personalised to enable students to achieve a short-course award in GCSE PE and progress to the full award the following year. By the end of Year 11, the vast majority of students attain a GCSE PE qualification but the grades achieved by some are very low. There are fewer opportunities to attain other awards in sports leadership, coaching or refereeing. Other lessons are viewed as recreation by teachers and students, and this is leading to higher participation rates.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is good.

- Subject and senior leaders and managers work collectively to secure good improvement to the subject. A shared common purpose among PE staff is leading to a number of sustained improvements, particularly in raising students' engagement in PE and sport and developing positive attitudes towards the subject. The challenges experienced during the recent rebuilding of the school have been overcome and the new, first-class facilities are now being used well. The lack of coherent assessment procedures in Key Stage 4 limits the school's ability to illustrate the full impact of the improvements it has made to PE.
- Self-evaluation and improvement planning are thorough but some priorities lack measurable targets to illustrate the improvements made. Lesson monitoring is regular and is leading to improvement, but some inconsistencies remain, particularly in GCSE PE lessons. Staff are committed to enabling all students to achieve an accredited award in PE but recognise that the choice of awards could be broadened. The school's proximity to the Olympic Games site is helping to generate a high profile for PE and sport in school. There is good capacity to improve further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising achievement in Key Stage 4 by improving the quality of teaching in GCSE PE theory lessons, broadening the choice of accredited awards and by regularly assessing how well all students are progressing
- gaining greater consistency in the quality of teaching and learning and increasing the proportion of good or better lessons by ensuring that planning meets the needs of the most able and includes opportunities for students to learn independently by themselves and in small groups.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE 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

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector