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Mrs Allen
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Dear Mrs Allen

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 03 and 04 July 2007 to look at work in Physical Education (PE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of PE, the visit had a particular focus on the continuity of learning between key stages.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PE is good.

- Data held by the department indicates standards by the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 are average overall and this is in accordance with inspection findings for Key Stage 3. Standards in GCSE PE and accreditation courses are slightly above the national average and students are being challenged

well to attain more. No differences were observed in the practical standards attained by boys and girls.

- Teachers take good account of achievements outside school and are starting to use these to personalise programmes of study particularly for students' GCSE practical assessments.
- The majority of pupils make at least good progress across the school from widely varying starting points. They make good progress in acquiring, developing, selecting and applying skills. They make better progress when developing their skills to observe, evaluate and feedback to each other on how to improve their work. All students have a well developed understanding of health and fitness.
- A good range of agreed activities are undertaken when students start at the school to establish a secure knowledge of their starting points, as
- limited information is currently available on Key Stage 2 attainment. Staff have good plans in place to tackle the exchange of information including extending the use of Qualifications and Curriculum Authority core tasks.
- Key PE vocabulary is prominently displayed around working areas and good use is made of students' literacy skills when they read and explain the lesson objectives and outcomes to the class. There is a missed opportunity to exploit the school's language status by having key words available in other languages.
- Students have well planned opportunities to work individually, in pairs and small groups, and they lead independent warm up sessions competently. Students work cooperatively and behaviour in lessons is excellent.
- Students universally say how much they enjoy PE because teachers help them learn new skills and they are constantly helped to improve. All display very positive attitudes to learning and work extremely hard in lessons to complete tasks. A large number of students commented how PE activities help them to become more confident, not just in PE but in their other subjects as well.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- All staff have good subject knowledge which they use very effectively to develop students' knowledge and understanding of practical activities and theoretical aspects of the subject. All have very effective questioning techniques that enable all students to be challenged in their thinking and in finding solutions to tasks.
- A good range of teaching methods are planned and used to engage and interest students and to maintain a good rate of learning, for example, guided discovery activities in tennis and reciprocal learning in health and fitness. Students commented that the range of activities was motivational and makes them want to achieve more.
- Planning is thorough and makes very good use of the four strands of the PE National Curriculum. Time for performance is used effectively although some time is lost when lessons do not begin punctually.

- Teachers are starting to use Information Communication Technology to support teaching and learning activities in PE lessons although this is underdeveloped.
- A range of assessment and tracking data is analysed thoroughly to indicate trends in performance for year groups, classes and individual students. However, assessment is only undertaken in the acquiring and developing strand of the PE National Curriculum even though all four strands are planned and taught. Assessment information is used effectively to identify higher attaining students for additional challenge and those making the expected progress; however it is not used well to identify students underachieving except in GCSE classes.
- Teachers in the department are starting to use assessment for learning strategies. The vast majority of Key Stage 3 students know how well they are achieving and what they need to do next to improve their work. The levels of attainment have been adapted well for each activity and enable students to self assess their own progress and set targets for reaching the next level. Students respond well to these opportunities.
- Work is clearly and effectively adapted via tasks and questions to meet the range of ability levels. All teachers set extremely high expectations for verbal input and participation in lessons.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Key Stage 3 students and those taking accreditation courses have at least two hours of planned PE. However Key Stage 4 core PE lessons only have three hours per fortnight which is below the government target.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been reviewed successfully since the last inspection to enable longer and more intensive study of an activity. The curriculum is broad and offers a good range of team games, aesthetic and individual activities.
- The Key Stage 4 core PE curriculum has a range of choices including opportunities for accreditation in leadership skills. However all option choices include a traditional team game, which does not meet the needs or interest of all students.
- Good links are made between subjects where possible. For example, students comment particularly favourably on completing work on the circulatory system and the heart in both PE and science at the same time to consolidate their understanding.
- Teachers take opportunities to start GCSE theory work in the summer term of Year 9 when the weather is inclement. However this is not systematically planned to support early progress.
- Students have an outstanding range of enrichment and extra curricular opportunities including, innovatively, taking additional accreditation courses during the extended hours programme. They have ample opportunities to experience competition, improve GCSE skills and practice composition and choreography in dance.

- All staff in the PE department pay very good attention to the outcomes of 'Every Child Matters'.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management in PE is good.

- The subject learning leader has good knowledge of the strengths and weaknesses of the department especially the achievement and standards of all groups of students. There is a clearly written action plan that is prioritised well to bring about further improvements to an already good department. As all members of the department contributed to its development there is a real sense of ownership, drive and commitment to implement improvements.
- Although the department holds a range of assessment data for all groups of students, this is not fully reflected in their self evaluation which is focused mainly on GCSE standards.
- Schemes of work are very helpful and have been successfully revised to reflect the school's condensed Key Stage 3 programme from September 2007. They contain a good level of challenge in all units of work and make clear reference to the four strands of the National Curriculum. However links between the revised scheme of work and assessment expectations have yet to be fully exploited.
- The subject learning leader and line manager for PE have a well planned programme of monitoring and evaluation activities. Outcomes have been used effectively to formulate the department action plan. Students have opportunities to evaluate provision and make suggestions for improvement.
- There is good deployment of resources, facilities and staff subject expertise to support learning opportunities.
- Staff in the department and the school sports coordinator have good plans in place to improve transfer opportunities between Key Stages 2 and 3, including moderated assessment data.

Subject issue – Continuity of learning between key stages

- A range of core tasks are completed when students join the school in Year 7 to establish a baseline assessment and to help students attain similar starting points for work in PE.
- Good plans are in place to improve transitions between key stages. The school sports partnership is trialling a form that has useful information on National Curriculum levels of attainment in two of the strands.

Inclusion

- All students are included in PE lessons including those with learning difficulties and disabilities.

- Students who are gifted and talented or high achieving are identified, challenged and offered additional opportunities. However low attaining students or those underachieving are not clearly identified for additional support.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- extending the assessment procedures to identify and support underachieving students, assess all strands of the National Curriculum and make closer links with the revised units of work
- considering revision of the Key Stage 4 option choices so that students have more opportunities to follow individual and/or aesthetic activities and personalised programmes
- considering systematic planning for the early start GCSE programme in Year 9.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE in the school.

As I explained in my previous letter, a copy of this letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on Ofsted's website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector