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Mr C Walsh
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Walsh

Ofsted 2010–11 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 14 and 15 September 2010 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 staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of 10 lessons and a range of extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good.

- A good proportion of students have well-developed leadership skills. Students are competent performers in a range of sports and activities. They have a good understanding of and commitment to a healthy lifestyle. Students are able to work independently and they readily discuss and explore new concepts in theory or tactics and strategies in games.
- GCSE results for PE and for Dance are above average. In 2010, all Year 11 students achieved a Level 2 BTEC Certificate in PE, equivalent to two GCSEs at grade C or above. Lower attaining students attain well in BTEC PE with close to a quarter exceeding challenging targets. However, the proportion of students gaining the very highest grades was below the target set by the school.

- Results in A-level PE and Level 3 BTEC Award in PE and Sport are broadly average and students make satisfactory progress. Results in Levels 3 and 4 BTEC Dance are above average and progress is good. The breadth of PE courses offered in the sixth form has improved and the school has plans in place to increase the take-up of these courses further.
- Behaviour is good and students are enthusiastic and committed to the subject. A good and increasing proportion take part in extra-curricular activities.
- The work of Year 11 students with West Oaks special school is outstanding. Year 11 students show impressive sensitivity and patience when working alongside West Oaks students, most of whom have severe special educational needs and/or disabilities. They give much encouragement to the West Oaks students and all gain a great deal from the experience.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- Staff have high levels of enthusiasm and expertise in the subject. Planning sets out clear learning outcomes and activities. However, these are not always precise enough to ensure that more able students are fully challenged.
- Lessons include a good variety of opportunities for physical activity, practice and improvement, problem-solving and analysis of performance.
- Students' frequent review of their own and others' performance against clear criteria and good feedback from teachers support good progress.
- Progress in Key Stage 3 is assessed and recorded formally on a regular basis but systems used do not fully reflect the current curriculum. Written work is marked regularly but it is not always clear what needs to be done to improve and a response from students is not always required.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is good.

- Generous time is given to PE within the curriculum. Most students experience at least three hours each week. Almost half experience at least five hours of high-quality PE or sport each week.
- A very broad range of accreditation is offered and includes GCSE and BTEC for PE, sport and dance. More able students do not all reach their full potential in the BTEC Level 2 course. There are many opportunities to gain accreditation in leadership.
- Students enjoy a wide range of experiences in Key Stage 3 but pathways to help them to pursue their interests are not clear.
- An excellent range of extra-curricular activities, both recreational and competitive, is well supported by almost half of students.

- Football academies for boys and girls enhance the sixth-form curriculum.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is good.

- A strong team of highly committed staff works well together towards common aims of raising standards and making improvements for all students.
- Largely accurate self-evaluation, based on rigorous monitoring of the progress of different groups of students, leads to improvement plans that are focused on the right priorities. Not all students are consulted as part of this process.
- Sports College status makes a considerable contribution to the ethos of the school, the achievement and well-being of students, the quality of teaching and assessment across the school and sporting opportunities within the community. The school sports partnership has brought great benefits, especially to primary schools.
- Most of the accommodation is of a high standard and immediate plans are in place to improve the facilities further.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the proportion of students gaining the highest grades in BTEC Level 2 awards in line with their school targets and ensuring that students are very clear about what they need to do to reach the highest levels
- increasing the number of students following PE-related courses in the sixth form
- bringing greater consistency to the systems of recording assessment in Key Stage 3 to reflect more fully students' progress in the curriculum
- taking greater account of students' views when planning and reviewing the curriculum and other developments.

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

As I 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. Except in the case of academies, a copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector