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Mr M Feldman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Feldman

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 5 and 6 October 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 eight lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good.

- Students attain in line with national averages overall with examination results by the end of Key Stage 4 on a steadily improving trend. Standards in the sixth form are below average and the school has put into place a number of actions to help reverse this position. Students following the BTEC PE course attain above expected levels in their practical skills, especially in badminton. Students identified with special educational needs and/or eligible for free school meals attain slightly better than others because of the quality of teaching and support they receive.
- Students make good progress overall from their below average starting points. A minority make outstanding progress in lessons when teaching consistently challenges and expects them to attain their best at all times or during extra-curricular activities due to high quality continuous coaching.

All students make good progress in acquiring and developing new skills and increasingly in making and applying decisions in different contexts.

- Students' attainment of leadership skills is a strength of provision because of the opportunities planned into lessons and specific units of work within the curriculum. Students respond very positively when taking responsibilities in sport, for example as councillors, ambassadors, house captains and leaders with primary pupils and younger students. Students' views are valued and responded to positively bringing about changes to the changing facilities, the range of activities in the Key Stage 4 core curriculum and the introduction of a sports award evening.
- All students spoken to say that they enjoy PE and the vast majority display very positive attitudes towards the subject. Students cooperate and work well together in lessons to complete tasks. Behaviour in lessons and around the PE area is always good. Students with challenging behaviour are managed very effectively because staff have an in-depth knowledge of students and their needs.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- All staff have good subject knowledge that they use to observe and intervene to bring about improvements in students' knowledge, understanding and performance skills in a range of activities. Excellent relationships exist between staff and students; as a result, students work hard and succeed in lessons. At times non-performing students are not engaged enough in purposeful activities to deepen their knowledge and understanding of the activity. Staff are skilled at using questions that enable students to draw successfully on previous learning or to elicit more in-depth responses.
- Planning is thorough with clear learning intentions although these are not consistently focused on throughout lessons. Opportunities are missed for mini evaluations to recognise progress and to focus students sharply on their learning. In outstanding lessons, a broader range of teaching methods were used very effectively to challenge students' thinking skills and to use problem-solving activities to find their own solutions to marking an opponent in netball. Good levels of challenge are planned for middle and lower attaining students, although the more able are not challenged consistently in all lessons.
- Assessment procedures are thorough, especially in the level of verbal feedback in lessons and written comments to help individual students improve even further. Consequently, all students know how well they are doing and the next steps in their learning. Staff make good use of National Curriculum levels of attainment in Key Stage 3 and 4 to motivate, assess and monitor students' progress. Good use is made of modern technology in theory and practical lessons to help students analyse, assess and improve their own and others' performances especially in gymnastics, dance and games. Assessment at the end of a unit of work is based

primarily on activities and misses the opportunity to recognise the full extent of students' achievements in PE, particularly their leadership roles.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and offers a good mix of traditional team games and non-traditional activities to both boys and girls. It is revised annually to match the needs and interests of each year group, including a greater range of examination courses. Students have good opportunities to study a topic in-depth by revisiting aspects across a key stage, which is leading to their good progress and improving standards. Students in core Key Stage 4 lessons have good opportunities to choose their own pathway of learning. Outdoor and adventurous activities have a high profile within the curriculum and enrichment programmes support students' social and emotional development.
- Students in Key Stage 3 have two hours PE each week in the curriculum. Although all students in Key Stage 4 have compulsory PE lessons, a third complete the BTEC course and a number participate in extra-curricular activities. A small proportion, however, still do not meet either the two- or three-hour expectation for PE and school sport per week.
- The school makes good use of a commercial scheme of work that is being adapted well to match the requirements of the new National Curriculum. However, not enough emphasis is given to students finding their own creative solutions to tasks. A number of external coaches extend further the opportunities to work with subject experts in both the curriculum and extra-curricular programmes.
- The extra-curricular and enrichment programmes are rapidly becoming strong features. New clubs have been introduced to extend the opportunities for girls and students eligible for free schools meals following an analysis of students' feedback and participation rates. The house system is very effectively used for competitive sport and students were particularly enthusiastic about taking part in sports day at a 'professional venue'.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- Procedures to monitor and evaluate the department's work are highly effective. This enables a thorough understanding of strengths and weaknesses and subsequent action planning that is focused firmly on raising standards and the quality of provision even further.
- The subject leader has created an ethos of confidence and ambition among staff and students. Changes introduced in recent years have been very positive in improving standards, students' rate of progress and self-esteem. Staff are highly motivated in finding the best opportunities for students and sharing good practice. Some staff would benefit from systematic opportunities to observe outstanding teaching, especially in the

pace and urgency of learning and the use of mini-plenaries to reinforce learning intentions.

- PE has a very high profile in the school and strong links have been forged with the School Sports Partnership to enhance opportunities further. Students' achievements are celebrated extensively; they wear school sports colours with pride and want to be identified as members of the school at external events.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- sharing outstanding practice in teaching more widely to bring about even greater consistency, especially in the challenge for more able students
- ensuring, when adapting schemes of work, that assessment procedures reflect fully National Curriculum expectations and students' wider achievements in physical education.

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

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector