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Mr G Barlow
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Dear Mr Barlow

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 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 a range of extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good.

- Results for GCSE PE, although below average, are improving. The 2010 examination results represent good achievement for students starting from a low baseline. Students achieve well in dance and results for GSCE dance are consistently above average. Only a limited number of students gain accreditation in leadership.
- In PE and dance lessons, students make good, and sometimes outstanding, progress. Students cooperate well in groups, take initiative, organise activities and take responsibility, sometimes for planning the next lessons. They show considerable creativity in their dance work. Students make good gains in their performance, particularly in netball and basketball. They demonstrate confidence in exploring tactics and strategies.

- Students enjoy PE lessons and attendance and participation are high. Most students show determination and commitment to improve. Students have a good understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- A good proportion of teaching in PE and dance is outstanding. Students say that lessons are fun and that teachers expect a great deal of them. Teachers' commitment and enthusiasm for the subject are communicated very well to students and help to motivate them.
- Teachers demonstrate high levels of confidence and subject expertise so that lessons are well-structured and learning is broken down into manageable steps. In most lessons, there is plenty of physical activity and a good pace to learning. The use of information and communication technology to support learning in PE, particularly the analysis of performance, is limited.
- Students understand the purpose of lessons because teachers set out the learning outcomes clearly. Lessons build on students' prior learning and ensure that tasks are matched to students' different abilities. Teachers give well-targeted feedback to individuals, groups and the whole class. Increasingly, teachers demonstrate to students what is required to reach each level or grade. Students are fully involved in evaluating their performance and that of others. Occasionally, the use of complex written criteria for assessment and the time spent explaining these to students slow down learning.
- Students have clear targets to aim towards in Key Stage 3 and GCSE PE. They know how well they are doing in relation to those targets and what they should do to improve. Students appreciate the 'ladder of success', used in Key Stage 3, which helps them to monitor their own progress against National Curriculum criteria.
- Systems for recording students' progress in Key Stage 3 do not accurately reflect the progress that they are making in lessons. There are no formal systems for assessing and monitoring students' progress in core Key Stage 4 PE.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is satisfactory.

- Not all students have access to a full two hours of PE and school sport (PESS) each week within the taught curriculum, even when including their access to dance as part of their creative and media lessons. However, a majority of students experience three hours or more of high-quality PESS because an above average proportion take part in the broad range of extra-curricular activities. With the support of the School Sport Partnership, the range of extra-curricular activities is expanding and includes activities such as 'boxercise' and dodge ball that appeal to students who are less interested in traditional activities.

- The curriculum in Key Stage 3 embraces the 2008 concepts and processes well, although activities remain within a traditional range. The length of time given to teaching activities encourages good progress. Opportunities for accreditation in dance are offered through a good range of BTEC courses in the creative and media department. GCSE PE is offered but no vocational opportunities are offered in PE or sport. Opportunities to gain leadership accreditation are limited to students identified as more able and talented.
- The programme of activities in Key Stage 4 core PE offers students a choice of different pathways to suit their interests. Students enjoy the activities but there is no overall coherence to the programme nor are there schemes of work to underpin progression.
- Students identified as gifted and talented take advantage of a good programme of additional activities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is good.

- The faculty leader and the subject leader work well together to raise standards and improve provision. The subject leader communicates enthusiasm and commitment to PE staff who share a common purpose.
- Self-evaluation is largely accurate and is based on secure monitoring of provision and the progress of most students. It has led to the identification of the right priorities, for example, support for and improved performance of individual students and groups of students.
- The specialism for creative and media arts makes a very strong contribution to students' achievement in dance.
- Facilities on the school site are limited, especially when the sports hall is used for examinations. However, the school makes good use of local facilities through the links it has established with local clubs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- finding ways to improve the amount of curriculum time provided for PE and sport
- providing more opportunities to gain accreditation in sports leadership
- ensuring a coherent programme for Key Stage 4 core PE with schemes of work that underpin progression and set out clear assessment opportunities
- ensuring that systems for recording students' progress in Key Stage 3 accurately reflect the progress made in lessons
- making greater use of information and communication technology to support learning, particularly the analysis of performance.

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