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Mr D Richards
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Richards

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 from 24 to 26 January 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 staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of 10 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is outstanding.

- Students' attainment is above average in core PE and dance, and high in PE and dance examination courses. At the end of Key Stage 3, girls' attainment is higher than boys. Students' attainment at AS level is above average and is high at A2 level.
- The school's monitoring data show that students' progress is outstanding in Key Stage 3 core PE and in examination groups. However, it is slower in Key Stage 4 core PE because less time is allocated in the curriculum. The school's monitoring information shows no significant difference between the progress made by girls and boys. Students make the greatest progress in developing their technical and tactical skills, because of the emphasis placed on this in all lessons.

- A significant number of students have gained representative honours at international or regional level in many different sports. The school's sports teams have high levels of success at local level and sometimes at national level.
- Students' personal development through PE is outstanding. Students represent the school proudly and thoroughly enjoy the wide range of opportunities that are offered. They have exceptionally positive attitudes and are willing to persevere to improve their skills. Students feel that their opinions are valued and acted upon. In lessons and extra-curricular clubs, students work together exceptionally well and show a high level of independence.
- Students demonstrate strong leadership skills and enjoy the responsibility of coaching others in lessons and helping in school sports clubs. They have an excellent understanding of how to lead healthy lifestyles through a balanced diet and plenty of exercise. Although most students show a high level of fitness, research commissioned by the school and the school's own monitoring show that a few students, especially girls, do not exercise regularly enough. The school has taken action to improve this and is currently monitoring the impact of the new initiatives on students' activity levels.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is outstanding.

- All lessons observed were at least good and some were outstanding. All the students interviewed talked about how the enthusiasm shown by all staff had inspired them to participate and want to improve. Relationships between staff and students are exceptionally strong and help to create a very positive climate for learning in lessons and an ethos of respect and courtesy. Teachers communicate high expectations and students respond with exemplary attitudes and behaviour. During the inspection, all students participated in the lessons observed. However, students say that, if they cannot take an active part in the lessons, they are always given other roles to undertake, such as coaching or refereeing. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are included in all lessons and receive effective support from teaching assistants.
- Teachers have exceptionally good subject knowledge and structure students' learning carefully in lessons. Teachers use assessment information very well to match work effectively to students of different levels of attainment. Continuous feedback from the teachers helps students gain a very good knowledge of how well they are achieving in lessons and what they need to do to improve further. Lessons are structured well. Students are taken through warm-up and cool-down exercises at the start and end of each lesson. However, sometimes the lessons do not have enough activity that focuses on improving students' fitness levels.
- The progress of students on all the examination courses is monitored exceptionally well so that any underachievement is identified quickly.

Support and guidance for underachieving students are quickly put into place, targets for improvement are set, parents informed and additional after-school lessons are organised. Most students know the National Curriculum level they are attaining and are aware of what they need to do to improve.

- Although information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively in some lessons, especially in theory work, many opportunities are missed to use ICT to promote learning and help students to evaluate their own work and that of others in practical PE lessons.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is outstanding.

- All students in Key Stage 3 have access to a minimum of two hours each week of consistently effective teaching. However, in Key Stage 4 a small minority of students who do not opt for examination PE or participate in school sport do not meet for the expected three hours PE and school sport each week. Consequently, although the school offers a wide choice of PE activities at Key Stage 4, some students do not make the same outstanding progress as their peers. The department is fully aware of this shortfall in allocated time and has implemented many strategies to encourage more students to participate in PE and school sport.
- The school offers a wide range of opportunities for students to develop their leadership skills through working with younger pupils in the school and in local primary schools, and through officiating and coaching during lessons. Sixth-form students often help at school clubs and sometimes during PE lessons for younger students.
- A wide-range of extra-curricular activities provides high-quality learning experiences for students. The take-up of these activities is high. The school provides a large number of sports competitions against other schools and within the school. Teams are organised to cater for students of all levels of ability, including those with special educational needs and/or disabilities. To cater for those students who do not wish to be involved in competitive sport, the school offers a wide range of alternative out-of-school activities, including a health and fitness club, climbing, aerobics and dance.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- The subject leader has successfully created an ethos of high expectations and commitment in the department and has enlisted much active support for PE and school sport from other staff. Thirty three members of staff organise and run extra-curricular clubs. The strong relationships between all members of the department help to ensure that good practice is shared regularly.

- Numerous displays and regular school and public acknowledgements for success and endeavour contribute towards the high profile that PE and school sport, including dance, have in the school.
- Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' achievements, especially in the examination groups, are thorough. Rigorous departmental monitoring and evaluation systems help the subject leader to know the strengths and areas for improvement well. Although the department's plans for improvement show generally how the targets will be evaluated, the success criteria are not precise or measurable enough and no indication of timescales for improvement is given. Following the subject leader's monitoring of activity levels among students, a plan for improvement was established, numerous actions were put into place and external long-term monitoring of improvements was commissioned.
- Engagement with the school sport partnership is very strong. Additional specialist sports activities have been financed through the partnership and opportunities for students' leadership development are increased through the links with primary schools. Resources for PE and school sport are very good and are used exceptionally well by the school to promote sport in the local community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- implementing further strategies to ensure that all Key Stage 4 students participate in PE and school sport for a minimum of two hours each week
- improving the effectiveness of the plans for improvement in PE by including timescales and making the success criteria more precise and measurable.

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

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector