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Mr P Lee
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Dear Mr Lee

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 8 and 9 March 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 nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is satisfactory.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is satisfactory with some good aspects.

- By the end of Key Stage 4, students attain below national expectations and too few students achieve the highest grades. Measures to address underachievement in Key Stage 4, such as the robust monitoring of students' progress, improvements to the curriculum and more effective staffing arrangements, are beginning to raise standards. The most recent school data show that the majority of students on GCSE and vocational courses are on track to meet their targets.
- Attainment has improved recently in the sixth form having been below average at times in the past three years. The most recent AS results are above the national average although this is for a small number of students and the latest A-level results are broadly in line with national expectations.

- In lessons, the vast majority of students are active participants. They enjoy physical activity, are enthusiastic and committed to improve. They gain new knowledge, skills and understanding but the rate of progress for each process is variable. This is because in some lessons they are challenged physically, but not cognitively. They develop their physical fitness and cope well with the demands of different activities but are not given sufficient time to explore, experiment and improve techniques, tactics and concepts. Teaching is often focused on acquiring new skills and completion of tasks without developing students' understanding.
- Students know how to lead healthy lifestyles and how to remain safe in lessons. However, they are generally dependent on teachers leading their work. For example, when leading their own warm-ups, they do not prepare for exercise effectively and are unable to describe the effects of exercise on the body.
- Some students make good or better progress. Those who engage in enrichment activities extend their performance and excel when competing in traditional sports such as basketball, netball and football. The school has a very good reputation for the success of its teams in these sports, up to national level.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is satisfactory.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge, are highly committed, enthusiastic about their subject and make learning enjoyable. They form good relationships with students and engage them well, using praise and encouragement effectively. Participation rates are high and non-performing students are generally purposefully engaged. Lessons are organised and carried out safely. Students cooperate when working in paired or group activities.
- Where teaching is most effective lessons start promptly and there is a brisk pace to learning. Activities are well planned, varied and structured and challenge and motivate students well. However, too much teaching is not of this quality and students progress at a slower rate.
- Most lessons have clear learning objectives which are shared with students although teachers do not always make students aware of how they are being assessed or the criteria for assessment. Teachers refer to students' levels of attainment in lessons and provide opportunities for them to self- and peer-assess. However, their responses are more effective when teachers use probing questions which require them to apply and relate skills, for example, to tactics and composition. Teaching does not always give students enough time to consolidate and improve their performances.
- Teachers often dominate discussions, providing answers and solutions for students, without giving them time to reflect. In the most effective teaching, students were encouraged to be self-reliant and think for themselves.

- Information and communication technology is used occasionally to help students recognise high quality but does not significantly enhance learning, due to lack of time spent on analysing or discussing the quality of the performance.
- Support from specialist coaches is well focused, of a high standard and makes a significant contribution to learning.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is satisfactory.

- Although the curriculum meets statutory requirements it is dominated by games activities. Opportunities to study aesthetic activities, such as gymnastics and dance, are limited and units of work are not long enough to provide a depth of study.
- Schemes of work are detailed and reflect the revised National Curriculum. However, planning focuses more on developing and applying skills than the other subject processes, such as evaluating and improving. Reference is made to students experiencing different roles, though in practice this is underdeveloped.
- The recent introduction of a vocational course, to run alongside GCSE, is ensuring that students now access the most appropriate course. There is not, as yet, a sixth form progression route for those students studying a vocational course in Key Stage 4. The number of students studying a PE and sport accreditation is high in Key Stage 4 but low in the sixth form.
- All students in Key Stage 3 have access to two hours of PE and sport each week. The minority of students in Key Stage 4 studying examination PE also receive this provision. Recreational PE and sport are offered for two hours each week for sixth-form students.
- The school has long-standing links to local sports clubs which provide a clear route into community sport, especially for those students who aspire to a higher level. Links to the school sport network support primary pupils' transition into the school effectively, through access to clubs on the secondary school site and the involvement of secondary school student leaders in primary festivals.
- Innovative cross-curricular initiatives, in preparation for London 2012, help students to gain awareness of wider issues such as global citizenship and the impact of volunteering. The national schools sports week is used effectively to raise the profile of sport and awareness of community clubs.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is satisfactory and has good capacity to improve.

- Recently appointed subject leaders are beginning to prioritise areas for improvement. They have a secure understanding of the department's strengths and weaknesses and have put in place ambitious plans which are already beginning to raise standards. For example, school data show

that significantly more students are on track to achieve their predicted grades at GCSE.

- Following a period of departmental instability a level of consistency has been achieved. This is evident in day-to-day routines and the common structure of lessons. However, some inconsistencies still need to be addressed, for example, in the quality of teachers' planning and the varying level of challenge in lessons.
- Departmental documents are thorough and well organised. Equipment and facilities are well maintained, with attractive displays. The department's range of expertise is being used effectively and staff are aware of their individual roles and responsibilities.
- Leaders are well supported by senior managers, who give the subject a high profile and appreciate its value. Subject leaders have some understanding of the most recent subject developments, especially in teaching and learning, although this is not extensive.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment in Key Stage 4 accreditation courses
- ensuring that all teaching enables students to make good progress, by:
 - providing a consistent level of challenge for all students
 - improving the quality of teachers' questioning
- ensuring that teacher assessment in core PE includes all of the subject processes
- providing a broad, balanced and more diverse curriculum.

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

Geoff Sheldon
Additional Inspector