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Mr P Hyman
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hyman

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 21 and 22 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 11 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is outstanding.

- Students thoroughly enjoy PE and sport and apply themselves very well. They rarely miss lessons and their commitment to improving their knowledge, skills and understanding is exceptional. Students demonstrate a very high level of physical fitness and resilience which enables them to persevere in a range of contexts. They are acutely aware of the impact of the subject on their health and fully understand how to lead a healthy lifestyle.
- Early assessment of students' attainment in their feeder primary schools provides the department with an accurate picture of their strengths and weaknesses. This helps teachers to organise the curriculum and plan appropriately to meet individual students' needs. Students go on to make very good progress throughout Key Stage 3 and attain high standards.

- Students acquire a wide range of skills which they confidently apply in and out of curriculum time. Higher attaining students in particular extend and develop their skills through the enrichment opportunities provided by the school. School teams and individuals excel in traditional sports such as rugby and hockey.
- In lessons, teachers place a strong emphasis on developing students' analytical skills and students become highly effective in evaluating, adapting and improving performance. Students demonstrate in-depth knowledge and understanding of techniques and are able to explore these imaginatively, with minimal guidance from their teachers. Students enjoy this aspect of their learning and fully understand that 'being a good coach' helps them to develop and apply skills. They are highly considerate of others, they collaborate extremely well when working with a partner or in teams and show acute awareness of safety.
- Students who progress to examination courses in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form continue to make very good progress and attain standards which are consistently above average or high. Students undertaking vocational courses, including a broad representation of learners, make exceptional progress. Strategies are being implemented to increase the uptake of girls, especially on the vocational options.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is consistently good with outstanding features.

- Teachers are passionate about their subject, set high expectations and standards and succeed in motivating and challenging students. As a result, lessons are enjoyable and students are enthusiastic and committed to improving their knowledge, skills and understanding. Students report that they have very good relationships with teachers who they perceive to be caring and approachable.
- Resources are prepared carefully to ensure that lessons run smoothly and a broad range of tasks is used to keep learning moving at a brisk pace. Innovative use of information and communication technology (ICT) significantly enhanced students' learning in basketball and badminton lessons. Teachers demonstrated the perfect model, using the school's own DVD resources, then challenged students to identify the key technical points. Students were able to carry out accurate and detailed evaluations of peer performances and provide positive and constructive feedback. As a result of very good teaching, students make particularly good progress in evaluating and improving work. They develop advanced knowledge and understanding, and the confidence to improve their skills independently.
- Students studying accreditation courses praise teachers for their organisation and the quality of their written and verbal feedback, which provides very clear guidance on how well they are doing and how to improve further. Teachers have good subject knowledge and a great depth of understanding of the examination requirements which they use to explain clearly and to answer students' questions accurately. However,

students report that they enjoy and learn more in the examination theory lessons which are interactive and involve a minimum of note-taking.

- Lessons are consistently well planned. Teachers provide explicit learning outcomes that are frequently brought to the attention of the students. A feature of the best teaching was the effective discussion at the end of the lesson which carefully checked the progress of individual students. Students know their target grades or levels and most are clear about activities they should undertake to improve. However, in some lessons, discussions are dominated by the teacher and students are not given sufficient time to think for themselves. In these lessons, teachers do not use enough probing questions to extend students' thinking skills; they provide answers before allowing students time to reflect.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is good.

- All students in Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 have access to two hours of high-quality PE and sport each week. Students in the sixth form have access to one hour in curriculum time. Those students who represent the school in team sports receive additional time to take part in fixtures.
- While the curriculum meets statutory requirements and is well informed by recent subject developments, too much time is spent on games in proportion to other activity areas. The subject leader is aware of this and time spent on other activity areas is increasing. A dance option has recently been reintroduced and students are now able to progress to examination level in Key Stage 4.
- The school has been particularly successful in working with local community groups to improve its facilities. Regular access to the neighbouring sports centre and judo centre of excellence is helping the school to broaden the curriculum and is improving standards. Students benefit enormously from being trained by high-performance coaches, alongside world class athletes.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a good range of option choices, including health-related fitness activities which further promote healthy lifestyles and lifelong participation. These include swimming, 'boxercise,' aerobics, and spinning, at the local leisure centre, which lead many of them into becoming members. Students' understanding of how to lead a healthy lifestyle is very well developed. The range of accredited courses offered in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form is a significant factor in raising attainment.
- Developing leadership and officiating skills is integral throughout all key stages. Students' skills are evident in most lessons. As they progress through the school, they have the opportunity to gain accreditation in their chosen specialist sports through national governing body awards, such as the hockey leaders or junior football organisers' award. Students further develop and apply these skills by supporting lower school house competitions and primary festivals.

- Lessons are organised so that students are arranged in ability groups. This ensures that they are working at an appropriate level and clearly helps them to make good progress. As the programme continues to broaden, learning becomes more tailored to students' individual needs as they progress through school. New schemes of work are in place for the Key Stage 3 curriculum and are being developed in Key Stage 4 to match the evolving curriculum.
- The school has a strong tradition of competitive sport and both curriculum and extra-curricular provision are well matched to the community. Links to local clubs are particularly strong and the school is effective in directing students into community sport.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- The subject leader heads a strong, committed and enthusiastic team which he brings together well, providing a clear vision for improved standards and progress.
- Responsibilities are clearly defined and staff readily take the lead, for example, in organising and managing particular examination courses. Staff benefit from each other's many strengths and the variety of teaching expertise. Less-experienced teachers are well supported and their professional development is managed effectively. Two of the teaching staff have successfully moved into the department from non-teaching roles. The school regularly leads the professional development of PE staff in the area, especially on the use of ICT to support learning.
- Monitoring of students' progress provides detailed and accurate information which identifies underachievement at an early stage. Allied to very good care, guidance and support, this brings about consistently above average and high achievement.
- The subject leader knows the department's work well. The development plan correctly identifies most of the main issues and priorities for improvement. Teaching is monitored regularly through formal and informal observations; teaching and learning are a high priority and an ethos is being developed in which teachers are comfortable when being observed. Judgements are accurate. The department's track record of improvement and innovation demonstrates a very good capacity to improve further.
- Partnerships with the school sports network and the wider sporting community are very well developed. Links with primary schools have been highly effective in supporting the transition of students into the secondary school.
- PE and sport have a very high profile in the school and the community. The school is rightly proud of its sporting tradition and recognises the very good achievement of its students. Senior leaders fully appreciate the subject's values and its positive impact on students' lives.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- consistently developing students' independence and thinking skills, through:
 - more extended questioning in lessons
 - allowing students more time to reflect on their work before answering
 - examining specific teaching styles which promote student-led learning.

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