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Mr P Gardiner  
Principal  
Thomas Becket Catholic School  
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Dear Mr Gardiner

**Ofsted 2011–12 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 16 and 17 May 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 eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is satisfactory.

**Achievement in PE**

Achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- Standards in Key Stage 3 are broadly average. Students demonstrate a basic range of sending and receiving skills in games lessons but throwing in athletics and racket skills in tennis are underdeveloped. Progress is generally satisfactory. In most lessons, students are taught the same tasks and have few opportunities to learn independently, which restricts their progress. Year 9 girls make good progress in rounders because they are given time to work together in groups to replicate actions demonstrated by the teacher.
- In Key Stage 4, students continue to achieve satisfactorily. A reliance on whole-class teaching and too few opportunities for students to evaluate their own and each others' work or suggest ways of improving limits their progress. Most students pursue an accredited award in PE. Results in

GCSE PE are 1% below the national average but this represents satisfactory progress based on their starting points. In the sixth form, results in A-level sports studies fluctuate from year to year but in general are below national averages. Significant proportions of students attain leadership awards in Key Stages 4 and the sixth form and use these skills to promote sport in school and the local community.

### **Quality of teaching in PE**

The quality of teaching in PE is satisfactory.

- Teachers are well organised and make good use of facilities and equipment. They share positive relationships with students and manage behaviour effectively. At times, good teaching enables students to build on what they can already do before extending their skills and understanding further. For example, in an athletics lesson, girls practised and refined their throwing action using balls and foam darts before progressing to javelins. Most teaching is satisfactory rather than good because lessons do not include activities matched to the needs and interests of students of different abilities or provide them with regular opportunities to learn by themselves or in small groups.
- The monitoring of examination courses is usually detailed and provides an overview of how well students are doing. Elsewhere, assessments are not used effectively to set personal targets or to raise achievement. The school has extensive data for examined courses in Key Stage 4 but only limited data to illustrate students' progress in core PE in Key Stages 3 and 4. In the best lessons, students are encouraged to work together to evaluate how well they and others are doing and suggest ways of improving, but this is not consistent across all lessons.

### **Quality of the curriculum in PE**

The quality of the curriculum in PE is good.

- All students receive two hours of PE weekly. They experience a wide range of different activities in Key Stage 3 which promotes their enjoyment of PE and sport. However, National Curriculum concepts and processes are not embedded fully into the PE programme of study. The introduction of the Diploma in Sport and Leisure and the BTEC sport award enhances curriculum choice in Key Stage 4. The pathway from GCSE PE to A-level sports studies in the sixth form is well established. Students in the sixth form enthuse about the guidance and support they receive from PE staff and the opportunities to develop their leadership skills but would like more time to participate in sport during and after school.
- The majority of students who do not opt for the Diploma or GCSE PE courses study an entry-level award in PE. Over the past two years, a large proportion of students has attained this award which is a notable achievement. An extensive enrichment programme, including inter-school and house competitions, promotes students' enjoyment of, and participation in sport. Students in Year 9 talked enthusiastically about the

BTEC course introduced this year and of their experiences on the Duke of Edinburgh Award.

### **Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE**

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is satisfactory.

- Two experienced teachers lead and manage the subject satisfactorily but lack a thorough understanding of the faculty's strengths and weaknesses. Self-evaluation is accurate in parts but some key judgements, such as the quality of teaching, are too generous. Monitoring is regular but the analysis of the performance of different groups of students lacks rigour.
- Other staff adopt responsibility for managing the range of PE courses delivered and this adds to the capacity for further improvement. Resources are collated well and regular assessments are made to ensure that students are on track to meet the expectations of them. The school's specialism in sport provides additional resources to raise the profile of PE and sport and recognise students' achievements across all aspects of school life. The contribution it makes to whole-school improvement is less pronounced.

### **Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:**

- improving the quality of teaching by:
  - raising expectations of what students are capable of achieving
  - providing regular opportunities for students to lead their own learning, by themselves, in pairs and in small groups and independently of the teacher
  - sharing best practice and rigorously monitoring the impact of improvements in teaching on students' learning
- improving the quality of day-to-day and summative assessments by:
  - enabling students to evaluate how they and others are progressing against the challenging targets set for them
  - incorporating National Curriculum concepts and processes into the PE programme of study and regularly measuring and recording how well students are achieving
- engaging fully in whole-school self-evaluation procedures to gain a full understanding of the faculty's strengths and weaknesses and the actions needed to improve it.

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

**John Mitcheson**  
**Her Majesty's Inspector**