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Mr G Fitzpatrick
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Fitzpatrick

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 15 and 16 June 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 make very good progress, as performers and leaders, throughout Years 7 and 8. They gain new knowledge, skills and understanding at a good rate and become highly confident in exploring and experimenting with tactics, techniques and compositional work. They enjoy the challenge of helping others to improve their work and provide constructive, insightful feedback. Consequently, students are well prepared when they move into Key Stage 4 and their chosen accreditation course at the beginning of Year 9.
- Significantly high numbers of students take accreditation courses and the vast majority achieve a qualification by the end of Year 10. As a result of recent curriculum changes, standards in GCSE are on a sharp upward trend and have risen to above the national average. Achievement in vocational courses is consistently good.

- Large numbers of students continue their studies into the sixth form and make good progress in relation to their starting points. Attainment is above average, especially for students studying BTEC, and many go on to study sport-related courses at university. The school's current data indicate that attainment will rise again this year.
- Students thoroughly enjoy PE and sport, understand its importance and know how to lead a healthy active lifestyle. They show determination, maintain maximum effort in a range of activities and fitness levels are high. They behave impeccably in lessons and give their best, whether working individually or in collaboration with others. Activity levels at lunchtimes are exceptionally high, through organised and recreational activities.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- Teaching is consistently good and sometimes outstanding. Lessons are meticulously planned and have clear learning outcomes which are constantly referred to in lessons. Teaching groups are arranged by ability and in most cases the planned work is appropriate to meet students' needs. However, tasks are not always adapted fully to challenge the most able. Students of all abilities are supported well and encouraged to achieve their best.
- Lessons are well organised and run safely and smoothly. Teachers are enthusiastic about their subject and have high expectations. They encourage students to take responsibility for leading their own learning. Relationships are very good and help to create a learning environment in which students feel comfortable and safe. Participation rates are extremely high and students are highly motivated.
- Teachers use their subject expertise effectively when explaining techniques and concepts. They provide a good variety of activities which sustains interest and allows learning to move at a brisk pace, with high activity levels. Although information and communication technology (ICT) is used in presentations and to demonstrate the perfect model, it is rarely used to support students in analysing their own performance.
- Feedback to students is timely and accurate. Teachers systematically check students' progress through probing questions which involve the whole group. Opportunities for self- and peer-assessment are provided in all lessons. Students know their targets and how to improve their work to reach them. Teachers formally assess and record students' progress at the end of each unit of work. The department is currently exploring new ways of assessing students that include the processes of PE.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is outstanding.

- The time allocated to PE reflects the important role of the subject within the school's ethos. All students in Years 7 and 8 receive two hours of high-quality PE in the curriculum each week which is increased to three hours in Years 9 and 10 to allow all students to study an accreditation course.
- The innovative curriculum is continually being adapted to meet students' interests and needs across the full ability range. It provides highly effective continuity and progression. Leadership is firmly embedded in the curriculum in all key stages.
- The Key Stage 3 programme is broad and balanced, with appropriate depth of study. Though traditional, it is well matched to local community sport. Links to the school sport partnership and external clubs are used effectively to enable students to extend their performance. Partnerships with high-level clubs help students to progress to regional and national level in their chosen sports. Less traditional curriculum options, especially a range of health and fitness activities, are gradually being introduced as staff extend their knowledge and expertise.
- The impact of the specialism is very strong, as demonstrated by the extensive sporting displays around the school, the commitment and enjoyment of students and the extremely high numbers of students studying accreditation courses.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- Leadership at all levels sets a clear and ambitious vision for raising standards and improving provision for all students, whether academic attainment, sporting performance or fostering healthy active lifestyles. Monitoring and evaluation of the subject are rigorous. Leaders know the department well, resulting in an accurate, well-focused and comprehensive development plan. The department is well structured with clearly defined roles and responsibilities and staff are highly focused on raising standards. Staff morale, commitment and support for each other are high.
- Pedagogical leadership is strong. Teachers and external coaches are observed teaching regularly and the commitment to professional development is strong. Staff expertise is deployed effectively and the quality of teaching is highly consistent. PE department leaders provide support to other departments in the school and lead the PE graduate training programme across the city.
- The subject has an extremely high profile in the school and the community. There has been significant investment in resources, especially in staffing and improving the sports facilities. The school provides strategic leadership of school sport across the city and, together with partner schools and the local authority, is making good progress in implementing the schools' competition framework.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding Key Stage 3 assessment systems to ensure full coverage of the subject processes
- enabling more students to use ICT to analyse their own performances.

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