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Mr S J Peach
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Peach

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 five lessons and a selection of extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good.

- Students perform well across a range of activities and many succeed in team and individual sporting competitions. Students gain confidence in evaluating and analysing performance. They develop a secure understanding of the importance of healthy participation in exercise. A well above average proportion of students has good leadership skills which they use to contribute to school and community sporting activities. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make good progress in core PE and examination classes.
- Students achieve well in GCSE PE. Results are rising and in 2010 were just above average. Most students achieve well in BTEC Diploma and Certificate courses with an increasing proportion gaining a merit.

- In the sixth form, A-level results have been broadly in line with national averages and represent good achievement. Achievement is good in the BTEC National level 3 course in sport and exercise science. Achievement in the National Vocational Qualification at level 2 coaching, teaching and instruction course, focused on football, is good with all 10 students gaining the award.
- Attendance and participation in lessons are generally good although a small minority of older girls are less enthusiastic participants.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- Outstanding relationships between staff and students and good management of classes ensure a positive atmosphere conducive to learning. Teachers' good subject knowledge and understanding are used to plan well-structured purposeful lessons that build on students' prior learning and support good progress. Learning takes place at a good pace and lessons ensure a good level of physical activity and overall challenge. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning in examination classes, but less so in practical classes.
- Students' progress is assessed and recorded regularly across the range of criteria identified in the 2008 curriculum. Students have target levels for PE. However, students are not always fully aware of the criteria against which they are assessed nor is it made clear in all lessons what they need to do to reach their targets.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is good.

- All students in Key Stage 3 experience at least two hours of PE each week and an above average proportion experience at least three hours. The principles underpinning the 2008 National Curriculum have been embraced in the Key Stage 3 curriculum and it provides a good balance of relevant activities. The Key Stage 4 curriculum provides a choice of activities and the increasing breadth on offer is helping to engage more students, including less well motivated students.
- Activities are planned carefully to meet the needs of students with physical disabilities, although no individual plans are in place to support learning and progress towards their personal targets.
- A well above average proportion of students takes part in an excellent range of extra-curricular activities in sport and dance. The focus on recreational participation alongside team practices is very good. Many students benefit from additional enrichment activities that include sports tours to Europe, outdoor education residential visits and visits to a range of international sporting events.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is good.

- Strong leadership is well focused on improving students' achievement and participation and is supported ably by a highly committed team of staff. Students appreciate the extra support that they receive from staff to help them succeed. Staff are well informed of current developments in PE and school sport.
- Rigorous monitoring of students' progress and the quality of provision, accurate self-evaluation and well-focused improvement planning are effective in raising achievement. Assessment and recording systems are securely in place and used to identify students' potential underperformance and provide appropriate support. Best practice, in the effective use of assessment activities during lessons to support learning, is not shared widely across the department.
- Excellent links with the school sport partnership have led to a significant increase in students' participation in extra-curricular activities and sporting competition.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- continuing to develop the curriculum to ensure that all girls remain active and motivated in maintaining a healthy lifestyle
- making clear to students the criteria against which they are assessed and what they need to do to reach their targets in all lessons
- sharing best practice is using assessment activities in lessons to support learning
- developing individualised PE learning plans for students with physical difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector