

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr D Butler
Headteacher
St Bernard's Catholic High School, Specialist
School for the Arts and Applied Learning
Herringthorpe Valley Road
Rotherham
S65 3BE

Dear Mr Butler

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 28 and 29 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 satisfactory.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is satisfactory

- Students attain broadly average standards by the end of Key Stage 3. Attainment on accredited courses by the end of Key Stage 4 is above average. Although attainment in GCSE is on an upward trend, too many higher ability students do not reach their challenging targets. Standards remain average because of the limited breadth and depth of the planned curriculum combined with too much teaching that is focused on task completion. As a result, students have a limited understanding of the subject.
- Students show an interest in the subject. They behave well, have good awareness of safety and try hard. Participation rates are high and non-participants are usually engaged in lessons taking different roles. Students know how to lead an active healthy lifestyle. Their fitness levels are

satisfactory and they can sustain activity levels in a range of contexts. Although students are given opportunities to evaluate and improve performance, their lack of knowledge restricts the quality of their feedback.

- Key Stage 4 students' perception of core PE lessons is that it is an enjoyable experience, a welcome release from the classroom, although it is recreational and not sufficiently challenging. Students' progress in Key Stage 4 core PE is not monitored.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is satisfactory.

- The majority of lessons observed were satisfactory although there is some good teaching. Teachers' subject expertise enables them to provide clear explanations and instructions and constructive feedback which helps students to make satisfactory progress. Effective use of praise and teachers' enthusiasm help to develop good relationships with students.
- Lessons are taught to a common structure, are well organised and run safely. Where teaching was good, planning was detailed and provided a suitable framework for learning. Lesson objectives were clear so that students understood what they were expected to achieve and assessment was effective.
- However, most teaching is not of such good quality. Many lessons are dominated by teachers' verbal explanations so students become passive or distracted, reducing activity levels and slowing the pace of learning. Few students know their targets or how to improve. Opportunities for students to assess their own and others' performance are too teacher directed so students become over reliant on the teacher and do not develop their independent learning skills. Information and communication technology is rarely used to help students develop their analytical skills.
- Assessment of students is rigorous. Their progress grades or levels are recorded, monitored regularly and challenging targets provided. However, teacher assessments are based on physical performance only so students are not given credit for being able to evaluate and improve performance or for their skills as leaders or officials.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is satisfactory.

- The curriculum meets statutory requirements and allows students to make satisfactory progress. However, it does not reflect recent subject developments fully. Units of work are short and do not give students sufficient time to achieve high-quality outcomes. It does not effectively build on the skills that students have acquired in their primary schools, especially in leadership. Progression in non-performing aspects is not planned well enough into the curriculum.

- A good feature in Key Stage 4 is the introduction of a BTEC Sport course and a further vocational option for students with special educational needs and/or disabilities to meet the needs of more students effectively. However, the core Key Stage 4 curriculum is games dominated and does not allow students to pursue their individual interests. Students demonstrate their leadership potential when helping to run primary school festivals but receive too few opportunities to develop these skills further.
- All students have access to two hours of PE in the curriculum each week. New strategies to increase participation at lunchtimes and out of school, especially targeting specific groups, are being successful. Consequently, more students are taking part in three hours of PE and sport each week.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is satisfactory.

- The subject is monitored regularly, using the whole-school system, so leaders have a sound understanding of the department's strengths and priorities for improvement. Monitoring of students' progress provides information which is used effectively to identify potential underachievement. However, this is not used sufficiently to address the underachievement of higher ability students in GCSE PE.
- Teachers work together as a team, are committed and provide a varied programme of extra-curricular activities. New teachers have been supported well. Everyday routines and practice are consistent and roles and responsibilities are clearly defined. However, not all documentation is up to date or made available to the whole department.
- School leaders understand the value of the subject and have given good support through substantial investment in new facilities and continued commitment to curriculum time. Links to the school sport partnership have been used to enhance provision, especially through providing external coaching staff to lead extra-curricular activities. Further resources have been committed to sustain a framework for inter-school competition.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning, so that all students make good progress by:
 - providing more guidance for teachers
 - broadening the range of activities so that students can develop their independence and creativity
- revising assessment procedures to include subject processes and not just activity skills
- ensuring that the curriculum provides good opportunities for progression for all students
- ensuring that departmental documentation, including policies, is up to date and made available to all members of the department.

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