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Mr S Peacey
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Peacey

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 5 and 6 October 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 12 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is satisfactory.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- The majority of students enter the school in Year 9 with broadly average skills. They make satisfactory progress during their one year of Key Stage 3. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make better than average progress because of the inclusive teaching and good care, guidance and support they receive.
- Attainment in GCSE has been on a downward trend in recent years. Although slightly improved this year, the proportion of A* to C grades remains well below the national average and significantly below the college average for all subjects. Students attain high practical marks but

do not develop sufficient theoretical knowledge to achieve high marks in the examination. Too many make insufficient progress. Standards in BTEC sport are much higher, though for a very small proportion of students. Standards at post-16 have been consistently high in recent years. Students on the BTEC National course make good progress.

- Lesson observations confirm the view of some of the higher ability students who say that work is sometimes too easy and they are not challenged enough.
- Most students demonstrate positive attitudes towards PE. They say that they have good relationships with teachers who make lessons enjoyable. A minority, predominantly girls, say that, in some lessons, there are too many non-participants because the curriculum is not well matched to students' needs.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is satisfactory.

- The majority of teaching is satisfactory although the quality is inconsistent across the department. All teachers have secure subject knowledge and planning is detailed, leading to well-structured and organised lessons. Teachers use a wide range of resources to support learning and pay good attention to safety. They develop good relationships with students, who behave well, try hard and are eager to learn. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are well supported.
- Where teaching is good there are explicit learning outcomes and teachers systematically review the learning throughout the lesson. Teachers give students sufficient time to practise and refine their work independently and encourage them to be creative when designing routines and applying tactics. Information and communication technology (ICT) is used effectively.
- In satisfactory lessons, teachers spend too much time talking, expectations of students' capabilities are too low and there are not enough different tasks to ensure that all students are challenged to achieve their best. The pace of learning is slow and students become passive, or occasionally, disruptive. Teachers rarely extend students' thinking by asking probing, extended questions.
- In most lessons too much time is lost through students taking too much time to change and further time is wasted because of the slow transition between activities.
- The recorded data, which show above average standards in Key Stage 3, are not an accurate representation of current standards. Too few students in Key Stage 3 are aware of their current or target level, or understand how to improve their work. There is no formal system for assessing students in core Key Stage 4 PE.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is satisfactory.

- All students in Key Stages 3 and 4 receive two hours of PE each week. A good proportion of them, especially higher ability students, extend this to at least three hours each week by taking advantage of the school's broad extra-curricular programme. Some good club links, notably in basketball, football, rugby and taekwondo, allow students to extend these skills in community sport.
- Including leadership awards, up to a third of students gain a PE qualification by the end of Key Stage 4. Although the BTEC option has raised standards, provision is still not fully matched to the needs of all students.
- Sixth-form students have good opportunities to study PE through A-level and the BTEC National Award.
- Although the Key Stage 3 programme of study meets statutory requirements it is overly dominated by games and does not effectively build on students' prior experiences. Too few achieve above average standards because units of work are too short and do not allow sufficient time for students to achieve high-quality outcomes. There is inconsistent coverage of non-performance strands, such as evaluating and improving, and students do not develop in-depth subject knowledge.
- The current Key Stage 4 curriculum does not continue to improve standards sufficiently. However, new option pathways are leading to more varied and engaging learning experiences. Students welcome more curriculum choices.
- Commercial schemes of work are being used while new ones are being developed, but are not being adapted well enough to suit the specific needs of the school.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- Self-evaluation is largely accurate and based on rigorous monitoring and evaluation. Suitable strategies, including robust monitoring of students' progress and early intervention, are being implemented to address the underachievement at GCSE. As yet, whole-school monitoring systems are not so well embedded at department level. Subject leadership does not set a strong ambition for improvement or a clear focus on improving the quality of teaching and learning. Practice does not reflect the most recent subject developments.
- A satisfactory capacity to improve is demonstrated by the improving curriculum, the high standards in BTEC courses in both Key Stages 4 and

5, the introduction of a student sports council and the potential shown by new members of the department.

- Subject leaders are committed and enthusiastic; they ensure the smooth day-to-day running of the department and consistent systems. Departmental documentation is thorough. The subject enjoys good support from senior leaders and is given a high profile, as demonstrated by the commitment to sustain a school sports network in partnership with its feeder middle and primary schools.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of students reaching A* to C grades at GCSE
- improving the quality and consistency of teaching and learning by:
 - providing more guidance for teachers
 - allowing students to develop their independence
 - ensuring that all students are challenged in lessons
- continuing to assess students in core PE, as well as on accredited courses, throughout Key Stage 4.

I hope that these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE in the school.

As 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. A copy of this letter is also being sent to your local authority.

Yours sincerely

Geoff Sheldon
Additional Inspector