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Mr P Hughes
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Hughes

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 8 and 9 March 2012 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 parts of 10 lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good.

- All students make good progress. As a result, achievement has been on an improving trend with increasing proportions attaining above expectations by the end of Key Stage 3. Most students in Key Stage 4 core PE lessons continue to make good progress in a broad range of activities. Attainment in GCSE PE has been variable in recent years reflecting the small numbers and greatly differing abilities of students that follow the course. The department have taken positive action to tackle this and results in 2011 were above average. BTEC PE was introduced to meet the needs of all students. All students in the first group passed with around half attaining the higher merit or distinction grades. Work seen in lessons indicates this positive trend of improving achievement continues for all age groups.

- Students demonstrate good skills in evaluating and improving each other's work and in leadership, reflecting the emphasis given to these in lessons. Older students enjoy taking responsibilities to lead, particularly as sports captain and sports prefects to champion PE and school sport for the school. They have a high profile in organising and officiating in a broad range of intra-house activities each week.
- Students have very positive attitudes towards the subject. They enjoy lessons and extra-curricular activities resulting in high levels of participation and commitment to their work. They have a good understanding of leading a healthy active lifestyle and most demonstrate good levels of physical fitness.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge that they use to set clear learning objectives and to observe and intervene with feedback. They use a good range of activities and teaching methods to engage students in learning. However, they miss opportunities to reinforce the objectives in lessons and are inconsistent in providing specific verbal feedback for individual students to indicate the next steps in learning. Teachers have high expectations that students respond to positively. Excellent relationships exist and teachers' enthusiasm for the subject is infectious so most students want to participate and improve their work.
- Teachers have good questioning skills but miss opportunities to extend students' initial responses and strengthen their independent thinking and learning. Many students remain reliant on teachers and their input to make progress.
- Teachers use a good range of assessment systems to monitor progress over time. This includes good reference to National Curriculum levels of attainment and students self- and peer-assessing work to recognise their learning. Strong emphasis is given to developing students' wider skills in leadership, coaching and officiating although these are not assessed specifically to recognise their achievements. Marking in examination courses helps students to understand the strengths and weaknesses of their work and includes useful details on how to improve further. Consequently, students know how well they are doing and how to improve. Assessment information is used to plan lessons although inconsistency exists in the range of activities and resources to support students with different learning needs and abilities in one class.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is good.

- The curriculum offers a good breadth and balance of activities over the year and is matched well to meet students' needs and interests. It enables good continuity of learning between age groups. Schemes of work have been adapted well to meet the new expectations of the National

Curriculum but are not explicit enough on how to meet the needs of students of different abilities. Good collaboration exists with other schools on the same site to enhance opportunities, especially for BTEC courses. The number of students taking BTEC PE has increased significantly in the last couple of years, reflecting the department's work to raise the profile of PE in the school.

- All students in Key Stage 3 and most in Key Stage 4 access the expected two hours of PE in the curriculum. Plans are in place to increase time in Key Stage 4 from September 2012. Inclusion of all students in lessons is a strength of the department's work. Provision for those identified as gifted and talented includes additional enrichment activities, links with local and district sports club and coaching roles with peers or younger students.
- A good extra-curricular and enrichment programme enables students to participate in a broad range of activities throughout the year which is particularly impressive for a small department. Students particularly enjoy being competitive through intra-house and inter-school events.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is good.

- The head of department monitors and reviews the department's work effectively, resulting in secure and accurate understanding of its strengths and weaknesses. Subsequent actions are planned thoroughly with a good focus on improving achievement further. Good opportunities exist to share effective practice in this small department. This has resulted in an expanding and improving department in recent years. A wealth of evaluative information is held but it is not summarised succinctly into one document to support reviewing the department's work further and setting its long-term strategic direction.
- Staff share high expectations and have effectively set an ethos that is raising students' ambition and aspirations. The profile of PE and school sport is also rising despite its limited facilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the quality of teaching and learning further by:
 - ensuring consistency in the use of assessment information so that activities, resources and individual feedback meet the needs of students with different abilities in each class
 - exploiting every opportunity to extend students' initial responses to tasks and question their independence in thinking and learning
 - considering ways to assess the wider aspects of students' learning, especially their leadership and different roles to challenge these skills further

- summarising evaluation information succinctly into one document to support reviewing the department's work further and setting its long-term strategic direction.

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

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector