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Miss S Busby
Headteacher
St Edmund's Church of England Girls' School and Sports College
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Dear Miss Busby

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 6 and 7 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; and observation of 11 lessons and other activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is outstanding.

- Attainment is significantly above average by the end of Key Stage 3 and in GCSE and BTEC examinations by the end of Key Stage 4. A high proportion of students attain the highest levels particularly in A* and A grades in GCSE. The quality of work seen in lessons is well above that expected for all age groups.
- Students make significant progress from well below average starting points when they join the school. They make rapid progress in acquiring new skills and in their knowledge and understanding of the subject. Students' eligible for a free school meal or with a statement of special educational need make the same rapid progress as others and attain well because of the quality of support they receive through teaching.

- Students demonstrate excellent skills when taking different roles in lessons. They are particularly adept at observing and evaluating their own and others' work, including through the use of cameras to record work, to make accurate and helpful suggestions on how to improve. Students have excellent understanding of how to live a healthy active lifestyle. Their teamwork, cooperation and leadership skills are first rate and they are unafraid to suggest improvements or take the initiative. They show high levels of independence in their learning.
- Students enjoy PE. Their attitude toward the subject is extremely positive resulting in high participation rates and excellent behaviour. They show high levels of concentration and perseverance to improve and work at maximum levels in most lessons. Students have ample opportunities to take leadership responsibilities and ownership of their learning. They receive feedback on provision and positive changes are made as a result which engage students further. The school's sports captain and sports prefects have a high profile in leading, organising and officiating intra-house events and competitions.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is outstanding.

- Teachers know students, their needs and prior learning thoroughly. As a result, work is matched extremely well to meet the needs of every student including the different ways in which they learn. Every student is challenged appropriately to their ability through different tasks, resources and questioning. Teachers have strong subject knowledge that is used to observe and intervene with timely and pertinent suggestions on how to improve work further.
- Staff expectations of students are extremely high as performers, for verbal input or when taking different roles in lessons and they respond positively. Relationships are excellent resulting in students that are motivated, enthusiastic and ambitious. All staff use high-quality questioning although occasionally miss the opportunity for further questioning or to use other students' input to extend initial responses.
- All students know how well they are doing and specifically how to improve. This is because of teachers' comprehensive use of assessment in lessons and at the end of units of work, students' own assessment booklets and extensive reference to National Curriculum levels of attainment in lessons and how to attain them. Marking and feedback on examination courses are equally comprehensive. The department holds a wealth of assessment information and analysis. However, this is not summarised to recognise learning and celebrate students' achievements over time in Key Stage 3 and for the different levels of attainment in examination groups.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is outstanding.

- All students have access to the expected two hours of PE in the curriculum and more in Key Stage 3. They all participate in at least one additional hour every fortnight through intra-house competitions and events. The curriculum has an excellent breadth of experiences for all age groups and is adapted well each year to meet the needs of each cohort. The new Key Stage 3 curriculum is proving positive for most students especially those starting examination classes from January. Provision for students identified as gifted and talented in sport is extensive both in lessons and additional activities.
- PE and school sport have a very high profile and high take-up within the extensive enrichment programme, including whole afternoons and flexi-days. The department makes excellent use of national and international initiatives to raise the profile further. They actively seek out and exploit every opportunity for students to be active, experience enjoyment and achieve success. Students were particularly enthusiastic about the opportunity to cycle from Land's End to John O'Groats, the mass competition events and to 'dance around the world'.
- Excellent links exist with other subjects to enhance learning; for example, with food technology when exploring healthy lifestyles and with science for the implications of fitness. The whole-school focus on Olympic values ensures comprehensive links between all subjects through intra-house events.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- PE has an extremely high profile within the school and has an excellent impact on students' achievement, self-esteem and confidence in a broad range of skills. This is the result of a highly effective department with outstanding leadership and collaborative staff who seek out and drive improvements swiftly. The devolved leadership is a strength of the department's work as everyone is held to account for students' outcomes. Leaders and other teachers continuously look for the next initiative to galvanise students' enthusiasm for the subject and their enthusiasm is infectious. An ethos of ambition permeates throughout all the department's work. Excellent opportunities exist to share effective practices within the department and several of its members have led whole-school professional development sessions.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring that assessment information and analysis are summarised to recognise learning and celebrate students' achievements over time in Key Stage 3 and for the different levels of attainment in examination groups.

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