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Dear Mr Barry

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Monday 09 and Tuesday 10 October 2006 to look at work in physical education (PE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of PE, the visit had a particular focus on the Physical Education School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of student's reports and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of physical education was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- Standards in games and gymnastics, the two aspects observed during the inspection, are variable. By the end of Year 11 girls demonstrate standards above the national average while for the majority of boys

standards are below the national average. A minority of boys perform skills in invasion games that are above the national average.

- The overall satisfactory judgement for achievement masks the wide difference in the rate of progress made by girls when compared to that of boys. Almost all girls make good or very good progress in knowledge skills and understanding across the four National Curriculum strands. The progress made by boys is much slower and there is underachievement in gymnastics performance skills and in those aspects of invasion games that relate to selecting and applying ideas and evaluating and improving performance.
- In 2006 results for both GCSE and AS/A level courses were below the national average and well below the school average for all subjects.
- Students enjoy PE. In those lessons that fully engage their interest they behave sensibly, accept responsibility in a mature way, work well with their peers and participate with full commitment.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory overall.

- Almost all teaching is satisfactory or better. One third is good with some lessons including outstanding features. The best teaching involves students in making judgements about the quality and content of their own and others' performances. The good use of the digital video camera and the introduction of peer assessment sheets each contribute to this aspect of the work.
- Class management, the pace of lesson, and the small size of many teaching groups all add value to the progress students make.
- In lessons taught by non-specialist staff, lack of knowledge of the National Curriculum and of the eight levels of assessment are barriers to learning. In these lessons tasks are not always appropriate for the age of students or sufficiently well matched to the ability groups that make up each class.
- Some short-term planning is very poor because it takes as its focus activities that will be covered rather than the specific learning outcomes to be achieved. Where learning objectives are included they are often too broad to be used to measure progress within the lesson.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is broad and suitably balanced and good provision is made for students with learning difficulties.
- Only Year 7 students receive the full two hours of time recommended in the government target. There has been a significant increase in the number of students in other year groups who meet the target through participation in the wider range of extra curricular activities available.

- Students appreciate the range of enrichment opportunities and enjoy intra school and inter school competitions and tournaments. They would like to have an even wider range of activities provided.
- When lessons are blocked together to cover one activity area they ensure learning is continuous. However, the present schemes of work do not support the use of assessment for learning because they identify the content of each lesson with little regard for how students might respond or have progressed.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- The continuing lack of a permanent head of department has an adverse effect on standards and achievement in PE.
- The acting head of department is very committed to her work. In the short time that she has held the position she has made an excellent teaching contribution, raised the profile of the subject and provided a clear vision for future progress. The department is organised efficiently and managed reflectively. There is a keen desire to embrace change and improvements through the School Sport Co-ordinator (SSCo) programme.
- Undertaking the head of department role in addition to another senior management post in the school has compromised the time available for monitoring and evaluating the quality of learning in PE. Consequently some of the issues leading to underachievement by boys have gone unnoticed and are not identified on the subject self-evaluation form.

Subject issue - PESSCL Programme

- The PESSCL strategy has made a positive contribution to work in the school and in partnership primary schools. The SSSCo has done some outstanding work in targeting specific groups of students to participate in dance, outdoor and adventurous activity and in small target games. In this way they can enjoy competitions and festivals that would otherwise not have been available to them.
- Monitoring and evaluation does not look closely enough at the quality of the work being undertaken in order that judgements can be made about value for money and improvement in standards and achievement.

Inclusion

- The school is aware of the need to provide for all students including those with learning difficulties and those with special talents. The use of assessment to provide work that is tailored to suit small groups and to share individual learning goals with students is identified in the subject development plan. Good use is made of teaching assistants to ensure

participation. Lessons encourage team work and collaboration through peer assessment.

- There is no specific curriculum provision for gifted and talented students although a good number benefit from the various levels of representation in extra curricular team sports.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- establish a permanent head of department
- raise the standard and achievement of boys and ensure lessons cover all strands of the National Curriculum
- monitor and evaluate lessons more rigorously and use findings to inform development planning and professional development
- write a policy for gifted and talented students and inform them when they are placed on the department gifted and talented register.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop physical education in the school.

As explained in my previous letter, a copy of this feedback letter will be sent to your local authority and will be published on the Ofsted website. It will also be made available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Howard Todd
Additional Inspector of Schools