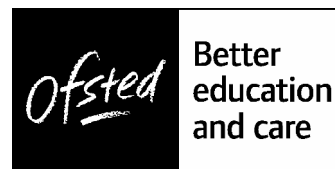


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15 March 2007

Mr Ashdown
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Ashdown

Ofsted survey inspection programme 2006/07- physical education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 24 January to look at work in swimming.

As outlined in my initial letter, the visit had a particular focus on the impact of the PESSCL strategy in improving the standards and quality of provision in swimming.

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 key school staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' work and observation of a swimming lesson. I looked at facilities and met with the Partnership Development Manager.

The overall quality and effectiveness of swimming provision is inadequate, while the school-based provision for hydrotherapy is good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in swimming are unsatisfactory.

- The standards attained by pupils in swimming in this school are significantly below the national average. This is because out of 20 Year 6 pupils accessing the course last year only 5% achieved the expected 25 metres (25m), while the average is 80%. Although all pupils make some limited progress in acquiring a degree of water confidence,

overall progress is poor, with most pupils barely able to complete 5m aided. A talented swimmer at the school who could already swim 400m before the course started was not challenged by the sessions, and consequently made little or no additional progress.

- There is no difference between the relative achievement of boys or girls or between pupils from different ethnic groups. However, the most vulnerable pupils with complex social, emotional and behavioural needs tended to make less progress.
- Pupils did benefit greatly from their exposure to the schools hydrotherapy programme during which muscle and joint mobilisation are effectively promoted and pupils are encouraged to weight bear. The calming influence of the water also aids relaxation and reduces pupils' stress levels. A small group of autistic children also benefit from water confidence sessions.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning provided by the Local Authority (LA) is inadequate, while the teaching and learning in hydrotherapy is good.

- The quality of teaching pupils receive is variable but unsatisfactory overall. The school staff that support the children in the water often end up screening and interpreting the instructions given to pupils and then attempt to teach the children themselves. This situation is clearly not suitable as school staff are not trained swimming instructors. Consequently the impact on learning is not good enough and this is reflected in the poor progress most pupils make.
- Although the local authority's staff are well trained in general swimming instruction, they are under-equipped to deal with the full range of additional needs presented by some of the schools pupils. In particular the staff were unable to effectively deal with those pupils displaying challenging social behaviour. Teaching is not sufficiently differentiated and not all groups of pupil are sufficiently challenged or stretched, including the most and least able. Although many of the pupils report that they enjoy the swimming and felt they were making good progress in the sessions this was not reflected in their outcomes.
- The land-based water confidence sessions were of good quality and well received by the pupils.
- Assessment practice is not good enough. Accurate records are not maintained by the local authority. Formative records are not routinely kept and there is no recognition of the small steps pupils make within and between levels. Consequently although all pupils made some progress in the past year no pupil received any form of acknowledgement of the progress they had made. There is also no provision for a formal assessment and the end of the block of sessions to gauge overall progress.

- The hydrotherapy programme is delivered well. Pupils enjoy the sessions and gain self esteem and a real sense of achievement when they make progress. Attitudes to learning and behaviour are very good also. Teaching staff develop good working relationships with the pupils, who respond well to them. Positive reinforcement and good levels of support are good features of the teachers' work.

Quality of curriculum

The curriculum is satisfactory.

- Curricular provision is administered and delivered by the local authority. It is satisfactory overall. Year 6 Pupils access a 16 week block of swimming for 30 minutes once a week. However, there is no top up provision at the school and therefore no opportunity for those pupils who fail to reach the expected 25m to try again before they transfer at the end of Key Stage 2. Schemes of work are in line with the National Curriculum requirements, but they are not shared with the school. There is a lag between theory and what happens in practice with plans well conceived but falling down at ground level on occasion.
- All target pupils receive at least two sessions a week in the hydrotherapy pool on a one to one basis with a trained member of staff, and where possible a parent/guardian. The provision is based upon the 'move' programme, an activity based programme which uses the combined knowledge of education, therapy and family to teach children with severe motor disabilities the skills of sitting, walking, standing and transferring their body weight.
- The quality of swimming accommodation and resources are broadly fit for purpose. The temperature of the water may be an issue for some of the children at the school. The hydrotherapy pool is suitable and well maintained.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

- There is a clear rationale in terms of the delivery strategy and all the respective policies and a procedure relating to safeguarding pupils, promoting high quality teaching and equality of opportunity are satisfied. However, there is a lag between policy and practice which means that on the ground the impact of these policies are not being fully felt.
- While the swimming programme runs effectively in terms of the provision of transport to and from the pool, ensuring staff are available to teach the pupils and programming sufficient pool time, there are a number of areas for development which need addressing. The LA has not been effective in ensuring the school receives best

value from its service level agreement. Deficiencies in teaching, assessment practice and in the accessibility of accommodation attest to this.

- The swimming development manager acknowledges some of these shortcomings and is putting procedures in place to ensure in future all provision matches the particular needs of all schools.
- The schools management of the hydrotherapy programme is good and they are continually refining its approach to maximise impact. This is underpinned by your good support.

Subject issue - the impact of the PESSCL 'Top-Up' programme

- The PESSCL top up programme is currently having no impact in the school. Because the school chooses to only allow Year 6 pupils to take part in the swimming programme they miss out on the focus of the top up, which is in Year 4 in this authority. However, the school did benefit from some additional funding to supplement the cost of hydrotherapy sessions.

Inclusion

- The local authority operates an open door policy and efforts are made to provide for the various needs of all users. However, provision is not wholly inclusive, as a number of the school's pupils with profound and multiple learning difficulties children cannot be accommodated by the pool.
- Staff as previously highlighted are not adequately equipped to deal effectively with the range of additional needs of pupils from a special school might present.
- There was little evidence of differentiation.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- allowing pupils in Year 4 to access the swimming programme so that those still unable to swim the expected 25m can then benefit from the top up programme
- amending assessment practice so that progress within and between levels is recognised and celebrated
- ensuring teaching is consistent, progressive and challenging at all levels
- ensuring staff do not have unwarranted low expectations of the capabilities of the pupils
- provide training for swimming staff that incorporates working effectively with pupils who have severe or profound learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

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

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

Yours sincerely

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector