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Mrs Tate  
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Dear Mrs Tate

Ofsted survey inspection programme 2006/07- physical education

Survey on the impact of the Physical Education School Sport and Club links (PESSCL) strategy on improving the standards of swimming in schools.

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 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 and the School Sports Coordinator.

The overall effectiveness of swimming provision, which is provided to the school through a service level agreement with the local authority, was judged to be inadequate.

## Achievement and standards

Standards of swimming are broadly average but pupils' achievement is inadequate.

- 75% of pupils in this school are able to swim the expected 25 metres (25m) by the end of Key Stage 2, which is broadly in line with the national average. However, this overall percentage contains a significant minority of pupils (over 45%) who were already able to swim 25m before accessing any swimming tuition. A further 25% of pupils were able to swim distances up to 15m and were already confident in the water. Only 25% of pupils are novices.
- A quarter of pupils do make satisfactory progress towards the 25m expectation however, the majority of novice swimmers remain unable to swim unaided and their overall progress has been poor. This lack of progress was compounded by their omission from the booster sessions, which were offered to the more competent swimmers.
- Good levels of success were achieved in the land based water safety programme which had a 100% pass rate.
- 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 tend to perform less well.

## Quality of teaching and learning in swimming

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- The swimming teachers are appropriately qualified and experienced. They have good subject knowledge and a thorough understanding of developing swimming techniques and building water confidence amongst children, although they were not always punctual.
- The pupils are split into ability groupings and receive instruction in small groups with a high staff to pupil ratio. This enables more individual attention to be given to each pupil and in a number of cases boosts their development. However, while the more talented pupils were stretched, pupils in the less able group would have benefited from more technical input.
- Pupils enjoy the lessons and as a result of their experiences 8 out of 37 joined a swimming club as a result of their involvement in the swimming programme.
- Assessment practice is not good enough. Although the pupils were initially assessed at the start of the programme an accurate on-going evaluation of progress was not maintained. Consequently some pupils received an inaccurate final assessment. There is also no provision for a formal assessment at the end of the block of sessions to gauge overall progress.

- School staff were disappointed that the relative achievement of their pupils were not formally recognised.

## Quality of curriculum

Curricular provision is inadequate.

- Curricular provision is administered and delivered by the local authority.
- All Year 4 pupils access an eight week block of swimming for one hour once a week. Provision is open access and no groups are excluded.
- A top-up programme operating in the holidays was offered to a proportion of pupils, but not to those children who were still unable to swim unaided.
- Schemes of work are in line with the National Curriculum requirements for Key Stage 2 but these plans were not shared with staff at the school, which limited the ability of school staff to effectively support the swimming teachers in reinforcing key points.
- Curriculum mapping is not ideal. At present the way the programme is run interferes with the schools literacy and numeracy provision which is a cause for concern. In addition a number of sessions were lost to bank holidays and staff inset days, which affected the continuity and progression of the pupils learning.
- The quality of swimming accommodation and resources are broadly fit for purpose and the staff make effective use of them to support learners' development.

## Leadership and management

Leadership and management are unsatisfactory.

- Staff at the school undertake their procedural responsibilities well, and in a timely fashion.
- Although the local authority has a clear rationale in terms of the delivery strategy and all the respective policies and procedures relating to safeguarding pupils are satisfied, there is a lag between policy and practice.
- 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 fully effective in ensuring the school receives best value from its service level agreement. Deficiencies in monitoring and assessment practice, and the curriculum attest to this.
- The swimming development manager acknowledges some of these shortcomings and is putting procedures in place to ensure in future all provision is tailored to the particular needs of all schools.

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

- The PESSCL 'Top Up' programme although well conceived had a limited impact in this school because due to an error the children targeted for booster sessions by the local authority were not the ones who required them, because they could already swim the expected 25m. None of the nine pupils who were unable to swim unaided were offered booster sessions.

Inclusion

- The local authority operates an open door policy and efforts are made to provide for the various needs of all users.
- Lessons are differentiated and more able swimmers receive a good degree of challenge, although less able swimmers are not suitably challenged.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring that the pupils in greatest need of additional swimming instruction receive it
- making sure assessment records are accurate and that the school receives relevant and timely feedback that enables them to recognise the progress all pupils make
- consider the timing and length of the existing swimming block to ensure it maximises continuity and progression in the pupils' learning and does not unduly disrupt crucial literacy and numeracy provision
- improve collaboration so that transfer information is shared with secondary partners relating to the numbers of pupils unable to swim the expected 25m.

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