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Dear Mrs Stevenson

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 6 February to look at work in physical education (PE).

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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' reports and a discussion with the partnership development manager.

The overall effectiveness of swimming provision was judged to be inadequate.

Achievement and standards

- Pupils in Years 3 and 4 make good progress in swimming and achieve well. Most pupils are unable to swim when they start swimming lessons in Year 3 but by the end of Year 4, almost all have water confidence and

many can swim short distances. However, very few children achieve the National Curriculum standard by the time they leave in Year 6. This is because pupils in Years 5 and 6 do not have swimming lessons to enable them to build on the good start they receive.

- Swimming records indicate that boys' achievement in swimming is better than girls'. The school has done extremely well to make sure girls have the chance to learn to swim by responding positively to parents' requests for single gender swimming sessions.
- Swimming lessons are contributing well to pupils' personal development and well being. Pupils in Years 3 and 4 enjoy swimming and they are very pleased with the progress they have made. Year 4 pupils understand why it is important to learn to swim and know about water safety and survival.

Quality of teaching and learning

- Swimming is taught by qualified instructors employed by the local authority (LA). The school judges the teaching of swimming to be good. This judgement is based on the good progress pupils make. Swimming lessons were not observed during the inspection and there were no formal records of observations.
- Instructors keep suitable records of pupils' attendance and achievements in swimming. Attendance is good and records indicate that most pupils make good progress in the two years they swim. The ratio of instructors to pupils is good; three instructors each work with up to ten pupils in ability groups and this helps to secure good progress.
- Pupils receive recognition for their achievements in swimming and the school presents water skills certificates and swimming awards in assemblies. Although swimming instructors keep records of pupils' progress these are not easily accessible to the school. Teachers do not keep a check on pupils' progress in swimming or report achievements to parents in the end of year reports.

Quality of curriculum including swimming

- The school timetable includes two hours of PE and sport for most pupils. The school recognises that the balance of curriculum time could be improved with more emphasis placed on gymnastics and dance. Swimming is part of the curriculum for pupils in Years 3 and 4. Extra curricular activities supplement the basic curriculum for pupils who attend sports activities at lunchtime and after school.
- Swimming instructors follow the LA scheme of work which leads towards pupils achieving the National Curriculum standard. Teachers accompany pupils to the pool but do not teach any groups during swimming lessons.

Leadership and management of PE

- The subject leader is inexperienced but committed to managing PE effectively to improve provision and standards. The Partnership

Development Manager reported positively on the school's involvement in the PESSCL programme. The subject leader has attended the Primary Link Teacher training and network meetings. The school's PE policy is under review and an action plan has been drawn up to guide improvements. A start has been made on evaluating provision by talking to pupils about their learning in PE.

- Overall, however, the subject leader role is underdeveloped. There are plans to observe lessons and scrutinise teachers' planning to gain a better understanding of the quality of provision and standards. Together, you and the subject leader have a satisfactory understanding of the school's strengths and weaknesses in PE.
- Improving provision and outcomes for pupils in swimming do not feature as priorities in the partnership development plan or in the school's action plan. Not enough is known about the progress pupils make in swimming or about the quality of teaching they receive from the instructors. Records of pupils' progress in swimming are not managed by the school and currently older pupils can not achieve the National Curriculum standard before they leave.

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

- There are additional 'top up' swimming sessions organised for the Year 3/4 swimming groups as part of the PESSCL initiative. These are organised for all pupils, regardless of swimming ability or achievement, to consolidate progress.

Inclusion

- Positive action taken by the school has enabled girls, whose parents were unhappy about their daughters swimming, to attend regular swimming sessions. The school organised single gender swimming sessions for Year 3 and 4 pupils which parents were prepared to support. This has enabled girls in Years 3 and 4 to start to learn to swim.
- Additional sports activities, such as squash, athletics, and street dancing have been organised through the PESSCL partnership and these have improved pupils' engagement in PE and sport. The employment of a sports coach for the last two years has also improved provision especially in games and athletics. There are also opportunities for girls to play football and talented pupils to extend their skills playing in tournaments.
- Lunchtime play is more purposeful because pupils have the chance to take part in activities organised by the sports coach and mid day supervisors. They also make good use of play equipment purchased by the school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consider extending the swimming programme in Key Stage 2 to enable pupils in Years 5 and 6 to reach the national standard by the time they leave the school in Year 6
- establish a suitable system for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' progress in PE, including in swimming
- take full advantage of the school's involvement in the PESSCL programme to improve provision, including in swimming
- improve the balance in the curriculum and give more prominence to the teaching of gymnastics and dance
- strengthen leadership and management by providing the subject leader with opportunities to undertake more monitoring and evaluation.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE and 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

Robert McKeown
Her Majesty's Inspector