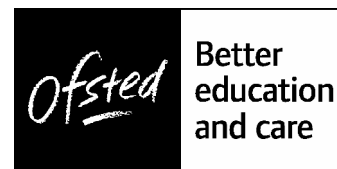


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Mrs Dalglish
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Dear Mrs Dalglish

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 06 February 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 staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, observation of a lesson and swimming facilities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in swimming are good.

- Standards in Year 6 are above both the local and national average. There is no difference between the achievement of boys and girls. The number of children in Year 5 already able to meet the required 25 metres national curriculum requirement is near to the national average for the end of Key Stage 2.
- Competence in stroke technique, and in the knowledge and understanding of how swimming contributes to health and fitness are particular strengths. However, the ability of pupils to select and apply their own ideas and to watch, copy and evaluate what they and others do is less well developed.
- Knowledge and understanding of personal survival and rescue techniques are satisfactory, but not as good as the standards demonstrated by pupils who left the school in July 2006.
- The pupils say they enjoy swimming. In lessons they listen carefully, behave well and persevere with tasks. Some say they would like more variety in the lessons.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Teaching demonstrates many good features that allow pupils to make quick progress in learning. The large numbers are managed well by being split into smaller groups and provided with tasks well matched to their needs. The teachers all have very secure subject knowledge of stroke technique and this allows them to identify those aspects of performance that require further refinement through repetition.
- Progress is recorded regularly against the criteria provided in the local authority (LA) swimming development booklet and the information is used for class organisation purposes. The pupils understand what they must do to achieve the next level and a certificate of competence.
- In groups taken by LA employees, too little emphasis is placed on questioning, reasoning and thinking skills. The pupils are usually 'recipients' of instruction with little opportunity for them to be 'participants' in learning.
- The ability of the most able group is too wide and the numbers too high for everyone to benefit from the same set tasks.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Thirty-eight hours, (curriculum time spent in the pool), are allocated to swimming across Year 5 and Year 6. This represents outstanding provision which in part accounts for the high standards pupils achieve.
- The school demonstrated its strong commitment to achievement in swimming through arrangements it made to ensure seven non-swimmers had access to weekly instruction.
- The arrangement for Year 5 and Year 6 to attend the pool on alternate weeks throughout the year is not the most efficient and effective use of time. Time between lessons is too long to ensure good continuity and progress in learning.
- Opportunities for enrichment through extra curricular and competitive swimming are limited.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The subject leader is passionate about the importance of swimming within the PE curriculum and is an excellent role model. She uses her secure knowledge of the subject as a teacher and coach to ensure all pupils in school are provided with the conditions that will lead to the highest standards and achievement possible. A further important contribution is made to wider partnerships across the LA by providing more able pupils access with well structured competitive swimming opportunities.
- Leadership in the school has a strong sense of purpose and a commitment to positive and inclusive opportunities for everyone to enjoy the experience of swimming.
- Teaching is good and evidence is collected to support progress in learning. Despite this, a lack of rigorous self-evaluation and value for money judgements have allowed some practices to go unchallenged. These include the quality of teaching of the wider PE National Curriculum through swimming, the contribution swimming makes to other areas of the curriculum and whether the generous amount of time allocated is used in the most effective ways possible.

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

- Due to circumstances beyond the control of the Partnership Development Manager (PDM) the funding provided for the 'TOP-UP' programme has made no impact on standards.
- The SSCO partnership action plan contains no references to swimming. However, implementation of the wider PESSCL strategy has led to

improvements in links between schools and community swimming clubs and to an increase in swimming competitions.

- Planned provision for the summer term 2006 was good because it ensured all children in Year 6 unable to swim 25 metres could benefit from the programme during curriculum time.
- The most recent arrangement by the partnership to provide funding for 'TOP-UP' courses in the spring half term and at Easter excludes many of the Year 6 children for whom the funding was intended. Places have been allocated, but they are not based on a detailed audit of need. Year 5 children have been included who could achieve the National Curriculum expectation during their allocated time for swimming within the curriculum. There are too few lessons in the planned 'TOP-UP' courses to make a significant impact on standards.

Inclusion

- The organisation of lessons ensures almost all pupils, including those with learning difficulties, receive tasks that are well matched to their needs. Groups that include non-swimmers are small and this allows them to receive any individual attention required. Classroom assistants are employed effectively to supervise and support participation.
- Talented children have good access to swimming clubs but say they would like increased challenges and more competitive work in lessons. They are not included on the school gifted and talented register.
- The planned 'TOP-UP' courses exclude Year 6 pupils unable to make suitable transport arrangements to and from the pool.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- collecting information on the swimming standards of pupils before they commence lessons in Year 5 and reviewing the cost effectiveness and efficiency of the present arrangements for delivery in alternate weeks
- ensuring swimming lessons include delivery of all four strands of the PE National Curriculum
- use swimming lessons to support knowledge and understanding of other national curriculum subjects and provide continuity in learning
- using the targeted 'TOP-UP' funding to ensure all non-swimmers in Year 6 can access a course in summer 2007.

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