

Alexandra House
33 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404045
F 020 7421 6855
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mrs A Newman
Headteacher
Sir William Burrough Primary School
Salmon Lane
Lime house
London
E14 7PQ

Dear Mrs Newman

Ofsted survey inspection programme 2007- 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 07 February 2007 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, analysis of pupils' work and a visit to the local authority swimming pool to meet staff and review facilities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in swimming are good.

- On entry to the school the vast majority of pupils cannot swim. Pupils make good progress in weekly swimming lessons in Years 4, 5 and 6

and by the end of Key Stage 2 standards are above average. 86% of pupils can swim twenty five metres (25m) and understand the importance of water safety.

- Pupils make good progress in Year 4 because they are introduced to water skills in shallow water, allowing them to gain confidence before progressing to deep water in the adjacent big pool to develop swimming strokes.
- Pupils thoroughly enjoy learning to swim. They talk positively about lessons and the different distance and personal challenge awards they can achieve.

Quality of teaching and learning of swimming

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- A good scheme of work includes clear, progressive tasks to introduce non swimmers to water and builds pupil confidence. It includes structured development of different swimming strokes and survival techniques.
- A team of well organised instructors and pool lifeguards provide good quality teaching in excellent, safe facilities.
- Instructors keep accurate records of attendance and individual pupils' progress and share this information with the school and school sports coordinator.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Pupils benefit greatly from regular, weekly swimming lessons in Years 4, 5 and 6 and easily achieve the PESSCL target of at least two hours of PE and sport within curriculum time.
- Walking to and from the pool teaches pupils to look after themselves and others and reinforces the importance of personal fitness and leading a healthy lifestyle.
- The local authority swimming development officer organises an annual swimming gala for competitive swimmers, but swimming enrichment activities for pupils of all abilities are limited.

Leadership and management of swimming

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- You are firmly committed to providing pupils with the very best curricular, enrichment and playtime opportunities that help to forge positive attitudes towards learning and promotes healthy lifestyles.

- A competent and enthusiastic Physical Education subject leader, ably supported by other teachers and a school sport learning mentor works well with the school sports coordinator to enhance PE provision, including swimming.
- Effective partnership working between the school and the local authority swimming service provides very good opportunities for pupils to learn to swim.

Subject issue - the impact of the PESSCL top-up programme

- The top up swimming scheme in 2006 had a good impact on improving standards in swimming. The seven pupils who could not swim 25m by the end of Year 6 took part in daily, forty-five minute swimming lessons over a nine day period. At the end of this intensive swimming programme they all met the minimum national curriculum requirements for swimming.
- The success of the top up swimming scheme has been thoroughly evaluated by the local authority and school sports partnership manager and a second top up scheme is planned for later this year.
- The school sports partnership does not track those pupils from other schools that cannot swim twenty five metres at the end of the top up scheme. There is no liaison with secondary schools to inform them of pupils entering Year 7 who cannot swim.

Inclusion

- All pupils, including those with learning difficulties and disabilities attend regular swimming lessons and achieve well.
- A learning support assistant enters the water with selected non swimmers to build their confidence and introduce basic water safety skills.
- The school works hard to convince all parents, including those from minority ethnic backgrounds of the importance of swimming as a life skill and insist that all pupils participate in weekly swimming lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- work with the school sports coordinator to develop enrichment activities in swimming for pupils of all abilities
- monitor exactly how many pupils progress into Year 7 unable to swim and communicate this to all secondary schools in the partnership so further opportunities to learn to swim can be provided.

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 Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector