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Dear Mr Mottershead

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 and 13 February 2007 to look at work in Physical Education (PE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of PE, the visit had a particular focus on the Physical Education School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy.

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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation and observation of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE was judged to be good with some outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in PE are good.

- Results in GCSE have been consistently above average over the past six years, often well above average. Girls and boys do equally well.

- By the end of Year 9, an above average proportion of students reaches and achieves better than the national expectation.
- A good proportion of students achieve well in Key Stage 4 because they follow GCSE courses and are involved in extra-curricular sport. Progress for students who are not involved in these is more limited. This is because they experience just a one hour lesson of PE per week rather than the recommended two hours.
- Results at AS and A-level are broadly average. In most areas of the course, students perform in line with expectations. The school is tackling the area that has been weaker, the synoptic study. With additional support, students are making improvements.
- Many teams and individuals are very successful, often at county level. There is success at national level in athletics, football, rugby, tennis, swimming, gymnastics and trampolining. Students and staff show an outstanding commitment to extra-curricular provision.
- Many students in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form develop very effective leadership skills and they provide very positive role models for younger students. Their leadership supports much of the work developed through the PESSCL strategy, both in primary schools and within the school.
- In work seen, standards were particularly good in swimming and trampolining. Students demonstrate the ability to analyse performance and suggest improvements from an early age. They have a secure knowledge and understanding of health and fitness.
- Students' attitudes and commitment to PE are outstanding. They enjoy the subject a great deal. There are high levels of participation in lessons and extra-curricular activities. Through the PESSCL strategy students have been consulted and new activities have been provided that interest and challenge them. This has helped to maintain positive motivation, especially among some older girls who might have lost interest in PE but who have stayed involved and remained active.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Very good relationships between staff and students and teachers' high expectations help to establish a very positive learning atmosphere so that students enjoy lessons.
- Lesson planning is good. Activities match students' different abilities, all students are challenged and there is a good pace to learning.
- Students particularly enjoy the very good approaches to learning that teachers provide in GCSE and A-level theory lessons. Students are challenged to think for themselves, work in groups and apply their knowledge in a practical context.
- Following recent well-focused in-service training, good practice is beginning to be shared across the department. As a result activities that help students to develop problem solving skills and independent

learning are developing. Teachers' questioning strategies are becoming more varied, helping to ensure that all students are involved in a response. Information and communication technology (ICT) is increasingly used to support students' evaluation of performance.

- Apart from in Key Stage 4 core PE, students' progress is assessed and tracked closely, helping teachers to identify and support underachievement and challenge higher attaining students. Students recognise what they must do to reach the next level of learning. GCSE students find the areas for improvement identified for them in their coursework especially helpful.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Around half of all students benefit enormously from regular participation in an excellent range of extra-curricular activities and events. The PESSCL strategy has helped to further increase the already broad range of activities. The annual 'Extravaganza' involves over 150 students in performing dance, gymnastics and trampolining to a good standard and to a large audience.
- In Key Stage 3, all students experience at least two hours of taught PE per week. Many experience more during extra-curricular activities. A good range of activities is taught and includes swimming, gymnastics, athletics, a variety of games and dance for girls. Boys experience more games activities than girls and they are not taught dance.
- In Key Stage 4, all students have one hour of core PE. They follow a good range of activities and there is some opportunity to select activities. Around one third of students follow a GCSE course in PE. Around half of students take part in extra-curricular activities. A proportion of students experience just the one hour of PE per week and they do not have the opportunity to make as rapid progress as other students.
- AS and A2 physical education are popular courses in the sixth form, as are the Community and Higher Sports Leader courses. There is no provision of physical education or sport during curriculum time beyond this.
- The school is broadening the range of vocational courses. From next year, students are being offered BTec First courses in Sports Studies in Year 10 and Year 12, with the Diploma as well as the Certificate course offered in the Sixth Form.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management in PE is good.

- Senior leaders are committed to and value PE and sport recognising its contribution to students' overall achievement and personal development.
- Senior leaders are aware of some shortcomings within the curriculum and are exploring ways forward.
- Leadership of the department is excellent, and is supported by a very strong, capable and committed team of staff.
- There is a clear view of what needs to be tackled and developed based on a secure understanding of how well students achieve and the quality of provision. Rigorous monitoring by senior leaders supports accurate self-evaluation.
- The school is part of a very active local physical education group of schools. The PESSCL strategy has supported this group in providing effective professional development which is well-focused on department priorities and linked to performance management arrangements.
- The department benefits from sharing good practice within school and with local schools.

Subject issue – PESSCL Programme

- The PESSCL strategy is making an impressive contribution to standards and provision of high quality PE and sport in Trinity school and the family of schools within the Carlisle and North Cumbria partnership.
- The outstanding leadership of the school sport coordinator is an inspiration. She demonstrates an ability to lead staff and students in successfully improving provision and outcomes across the partnership.
- There is very high level of commitment to the national strategy from the PE department and senior leaders.
- The strategy has enabled a broadening of students' experiences in PE and sport both within curriculum time and beyond it, building on well established good provision. This has led to increased achievement, motivation and participation, especially among groups of students in danger of losing interest in PE and sport.
- The leadership skills of many students have been developed substantially through 'Step into Sport' programmes and other leadership courses offered in school. Young leaders have made a significant contribution to the work with primary age students within the family of schools and students in Trinity School.
- There has been a strong contribution to professional development for staff both in Trinity and in local schools.
- The school has supported the Top Up swimming programme of 2006 aimed at Year 7 pupils. These were not very well supported and the programme arrangements have been adjusted for 2007 to ensure that more students benefit.
- The coordinator has started to work in partnership with Trinity school and others in the family to further improve opportunities for students identified as talented.

- All action taken is carefully targeted on priorities arising from good consultation with students and staff.
- Most of the targets set by the partnership have been met or exceeded. For example, the number of students taking part in extra-curricular activities significantly exceeds the national average.

Inclusion

- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported.
- The PESSCL strategy has helped to provide a broader range of activities within the curriculum to help ensure that all students, especially girls in danger of losing interest in PE and sport, stay involved and active.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed:

- provide all students with at least two hours PE in Years 10 and 11, especially those not following an accredited course or taking part in extra-curricular activities
- improve provision of PE and sport for all sixth form students, particularly those not following PE and sport related courses
- keep records of students' progress in core physical education in Key Stage 4.

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

Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector