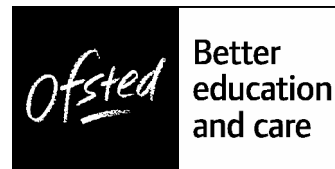


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23 March 2007

Mr Cowlshaw
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Dear Mr Cowlshaw

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 and those of the Outwood Grange School Sport Partnership, during my visit on 7 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, analysis of pupils' work and observation of two lessons.

Context

The school has its own 10 metre swimming pool of a depth of 1m to 1m 10cm. This was provided by PTA funds in the 1970's. The pool was out of action during the autumn term 2006 due to the need for unforeseen maintenance and repairs.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in swimming are good at Key Stage 2.

- Around one third of pupils are beginners when they start swimming lessons in Year 3. A small number have very little prior experience of swimming and are fearful of the water. All pupils make good progress because they are well taught in weekly lessons from Year 3 to Year 6.
- Pupils are confident, competent swimmers in a number of strokes by Year 6. They have competent floating and sculling skills and they can swim underwater. It is very rare for pupils not to be able to swim the recommended 25 metres by the time they leave school.
- Pupils have a good understanding of water safety.
- Pupils' competence in deep water in terms of personal survival skills such as surface diving or treading water is less secure because the school's shallow pool restricts the teaching of these skills. Some pupils gain these skills through involvement in clubs beyond the school.
- The limitations of the pool mean that some more able swimmers are not always fully challenged.
- Beginners and those fearful of water gain confidence quickly and make good progress.
- Pupils enjoy swimming lessons. They attend regularly and have good attitudes to learning.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good and helps pupils to make good progress.

- The swimming teacher is well qualified and knowledgeable and this results in pupils making good gains in their swimming skills.
- Lessons are well organised to ensure safety in the pool. Pupils are taught how to keep safe both in the pool and of the dangers water can present.
- Relationships between the teacher and pupils are positive and behaviour is well managed.
- Records of pupils' progress are kept. Pupils are rewarded for their achievements at frequent intervals through the school's award scheme helping to maintain their enthusiasm.
- Planning ensures good progression in the acquisition of skills but does not take full account of all the elements of the National Curriculum. Consequently, opportunities to develop pupils' literacy skills or ability to evaluate their work, for example, are not fully taken.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good and supports pupils' progress.

- A substantial amount of time is allocated to teaching swimming. All pupils have a one hour lesson per week, ensuring 40-50 minutes taught time.
- A well structured and progressive programme of competencies that can be developed in a shallow pool supports pupils' progress. The programme includes the teaching of water safety and some personal survival skills.
- The programme does not include coverage of the wider requirements of National Curriculum nor does it plan to develop deep water activities.
- An annual inter-house swimming gala organised by the swimming teacher enables around half the pupils to take part in competitive swimming.
- A smaller number of pupils train for and take part in local galas.
- A small number of pupils attend local swimming clubs, competing regularly and gaining more advanced awards.

Leadership and management

The leadership and management of swimming in the school are satisfactory.

- The school and governors are fully committed to providing swimming for all pupils. They fund a well qualified swimming teacher. They commit a substantial amount of curriculum time to swimming.
- Though the governors are committed to funding the day to day maintenance of the pool, finance to fund major renovations has not been planned in to the budget. The school is currently facing the need to find funding for major works.
- The assessment and recording of pupils' progress is well managed and parents are fully informed of their children's progress.
- The swimming teacher organises the classes well to reduce risks but in most classes the ratio of pupils to teacher for lessons falls outside those recommended. A formal risk assessment of swimming has not been carried out.
- There has been little focus on developing the quality of learning and teaching in swimming alongside developments across the school.
- There has been little formal monitoring and evaluation of swimming provision.

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

- The Outwood Grange School Sport Partnership provides guidance to pupils and their parents on swimming clubs available locally. Currently there are around 12 pupils attending these clubs.
- There are plans for the partnership to hold a swimming gala for primary schools. This has been postponed because of unforeseen difficulties in accessing local pools that are beyond the control of the partnership.
- The School Sport Partnership Top Up schemes have not had an impact on swimming in this school.
- The Partnership had arrangements in place to provide 'Top Up' swimming courses for pupils during summer term 2006. A local pool was closed unexpectedly and, as a consequence, the local authority provided Top Up swimming opportunities and the funding allocated to the partnership was not used.
- This school did not take up the offer of 'Top Up' swimming in 2006 because almost all their pupils were competent swimmers. The school deemed that the three non-swimmers would not benefit from the scheme.
- The Partnership has plans in place to provide 'Top Up' swimming during in 2007. The offer of these courses has not been taken up by the school because they are confident that all their pupils will reach the required level of competence by the end of the summer term.
- The Partnership has offered 'Top Up' swimming to Year 5 and 6 pupils in all its primary schools for 2007. It is due to take place in February and Easter holidays. The scheme is being offered earlier than is usual because there has been limited provision of swimming across the local authority over the past year.
- There are a number of difficulties with these arrangements.
- The early offer of 'Top Up' courses mean that, for some pupils, this provision could well be replacing what should be their normal swimming provision.
- The courses are not fully inclusive because they take place during holiday time and depend on families providing transport to the swimming venues.
- The partnership does not know the total number of non-swimmers in schools and the reasons for this. This restricts their ability to provide appropriate provision for groups with specific needs, for example, cultural considerations.
- The Partnership does not know what proportion of non-swimmers takes up the offer of 'Top Up' swimming so it is difficult to estimate its overall impact.
- The courses planned are for five 30 minute lessons over a five day period, with the possibility of five further lessons at Easter time. The one five day experience is below the recommended length of course. The long gap between the courses could restrict progress.

Inclusion

- Pupils deemed more vulnerable are well supported and achieve well in swimming.
- Pupils from minority ethnic groups, particularly those who are nervous of water and have had little prior experience of swimming, make good progress.
- Pupils with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make good progress. The swimming teacher is well informed of their needs though there is seldom additional support provided for them during swimming lessons.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve pupils' personal survival skills by providing opportunities for older pupils to learn to use these skills in deep water
- provide more opportunities in swimming lessons for pupils to develop key skills, such as literacy, and broader competencies such the ability to evaluate and improve their work
- carry out risk assessment of swimming activities and ensure that the pupil to teacher/adult ratios for taught lessons are appropriate
- ensure that the teaching of swimming is included in action taken across the school to develop and support learning and teaching, and monitor provision more frequently.

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

Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector