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Mr I Ward  
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Dear Mr Ward

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 March 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 key staff and pupils, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of pupils' reports, an observation of one swimming lesson and one gymnastics lesson.

The overall effectiveness of swimming provision was judged to be inadequate. Provision in other aspects of PE is better than this; the latest Ofsted inspection judged it to be good.

#### Achievement and standards in swimming

- Standards in swimming in Key Stage 2 are inadequate. This is because very few pupils manage to achieve the National Curriculum swimming standard for Key Stage 2. Pupils start their swimming lessons in Year 4

with very little water confidence. Most pupils make satisfactory progress in the short time they have to learn to swim. The school's records show that last year most pupils achieved basic water confidence and some started to swim short distances. However, no Year 4 pupils achieved the National Curriculum standard for swimming.

- Although pupils only have a limited amount of time learning to swim, the lessons are contributing positively to pupils' personal development and well being. Pupils interviewed knew why it is important to learn to swim for personal safety and as a contributor to keeping fit and healthy.
- The school judges standards in other aspects of PE to be good but there are no tracking records to support this view. The subject leader expects almost all pupils in Year 6 to achieve the age related level in PE by the end of the year, although not in swimming. Pupils clearly enjoy PE and sport. Those interviewed talked excitedly about their involvement in PE lessons and sports activities. They had a very good knowledge of the effects of exercise on their bodies.

#### Quality of teaching and learning including swimming

- The quality of teaching and learning in the swimming lesson observed was satisfactory overall but inadequate for some pupils. Swimming is taught by qualified instructors employed by the local authority (LA). Inspectors observed four instructors working with two classes of Year 4 pupils. The pool space was limited as instructors were working with many non-swimmers. This had an adverse effect on the quality of teaching and learning particularly in one of the two pools. The restricted space and poor acoustics made it difficult for instructors to communicate with their groups and some pupils had to get out of the water periodically to listen to instructions. Although instructors were conscious of the need to build pupils' confidence in water, the pace of learning was slow. Progress for pupils during the lesson was variable and no better than satisfactory.
- The swimming instructors follow the LA swimming programme. Instructors keep a record of pupils' swimming achievements and these are passed to the school. The school compiles an overall record of progress and presents swimming certificates to pupils to mark their achievements. This record is not analysed to evaluate rates of progress or overall outcomes for pupils. The LA has no central record of pupils' progress and achievements for all schools. The school does not track pupils' progress in PE. The end of year reports written for parents give an indication of pupils' achievements but do not include comments on achievements in swimming.
- Inspectors also observed one gymnastics lesson in which the quality of teaching and learning was outstanding. This lesson was well planned and clearly focussed on pupils achieving high quality outcomes. Pupils were managed very well and given good opportunities to extend their subject vocabulary. The pace of learning was brisk and all pupils were included. Pupils showed a high level of commitment and enthusiasm. Good emphasis was placed on pupils evaluating and improving their performances.

## Quality of curriculum including swimming

- The school timetable indicates that all pupils have two hours of PE in curriculum time. This is supplemented by a very good range of extra curricular sports activities. All aspects of PE are covered in the curriculum, including outdoor and adventure activities for those pupils who attend a residential visit in Years 5 or 6. The extensive extra curricular sports programme includes before school, lunchtime and after school clubs in many different sports and dance. Older pupils also have the chance to play successfully in many inter school sports competitions.
- Swimming is part of the PE programme for Year 4 pupils; they receive nine hours of tuition over one and half terms. Almost all pupils participate in this. The swimming curriculum is designed by the LA. Swimming instructors follow the LA scheme of work which leads towards pupils achieving the National Curriculum standard. Teachers and teaching assistants accompany pupils to the pool and supervise changing and support pupils' engagement during the lessons. Additional top up sessions were organised in 2006 for Year 6 pupils but only a small proportion, mostly boys, attended these.
- Involvement in the PESSCL programme has helped improve provision in PE. Specialist instruction from sports coaches has extended the range of sports activities offered to pupils. Many pupils of all abilities have had the chance to participate in several sports festivals and tournaments run by the partner high school.

## Leadership and management including swimming

- Subject leadership and management are good overall. The experienced and enthusiastic subject leader has completed the primary link teacher training and ensured the school has participated fully in the PESSCL programme. He is committed to providing pupils with good quality PE and sports opportunities.
- Developments in PE are recorded in a subject action plan and progress with these is reviewed part way through and at the end of the year. However, the evaluations focus more on the activities completed rather than on the impact and outcomes for pupils. Good support has been provided for teachers who have requested help with improving the quality of their lessons.
- Although monitoring of teaching and learning is included in the subject leader's role, there are no records kept of the outcomes of these observations. A particularly strong feature of the subject leader's work is the management and organisation of the very good extra curricular programme. This is extended to organising events for all schools in the local authority. The subject leader recognises that there is a need to introduce a workable system for assessing and recording pupils' progress in PE.

- Accommodation and resources are good and soon to be improved further with the opening of a small sports hall which is currently under construction. Swimming facilities are adequate, although pupils have to travel by bus to the pool and receive their lessons in a restricted space because there are so many non swimmers.
- The school's swimming programme is managed by the LA. The funding allocated to the sports partnership for 'top up' swimming has been passed on to the LA. No quality assurance is completed by the school or the local authority on the effectiveness of the teaching of swimming, including the 'top up' sessions, or the impact this has had on pupils' progress.

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

- Although top up sessions were available in 2006 they had little impact on raising standards in swimming.
- Although most pupils do not swim after Year 4, last year a group of Year 6 pupils received additional 'top up' lessons. These were successful in helping some pupils, mainly boys, consolidate their swimming skills but the school does not have a record of the overall outcomes of these sessions.

#### Inclusion

- All pupils are included in PE lessons. Involvement in the PESSCL programme has provided more pupils with the chance to experience an even wider range of sports activities. Many pupils attend the extensive range of extra curricular activities on offer to them. Some pupils from Muslim families have other commitments which mean they are unable to attend some after school activities.
- The swimming programme is organised for Year 4 pupils rather than older age groups. This is in response to the cultural preferences of Muslim parents who are unhappy about their children swimming in mixed gender groups after Year 4. Providing single gender swimming sessions has been considered but suitable arrangements for changing at the pool and employing female instructors and lifeguards for girls' swimming sessions could not be organised.
- Almost all pupils in Year 4 attend the swimming sessions and benefit from them. However as most pupils have little or no prior swimming experience and receive a limited number of lessons, they make limited progress and do not achieve the expected standard for Key Stage 2 pupils.

#### Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consider whether the current arrangements for swimming are an adequate response to enable pupils to achieve the expected National Curriculum standard by the end of Year 6
- establish a suitable system for assessing, recording and reporting pupils' progress in PE, including in swimming

- strengthen subject leadership and management to include more monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning and an analysis of pupils' progress including in swimming.

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

