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Sister Niblock
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Dear Sister Niblock

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 28 and 29 March 2007 to look at work in PE.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, 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, analysis of students' work and observation of three part-lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE was judged to be satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are satisfactory.

- Students' attainment on entry in Year 7 is average and below average. The majority achieve satisfactorily and attain standards at the end of Key Stage 3 and 4 that are broadly in line with the national average.
- Year 7 students work well in pairs and small groups for sustained periods of time when practicing different shots in volleyball. In a Year 11 trampolining lesson students linked different jumping actions together to form a basic routine.

- GCSE PE results fell significantly in 2005 to well below the national average. The GCSE course did not recruit enough students to run it in 2006.
- Students' personal development and well being are outstanding. They are polite, enthusiastic and very well behaved. A significant proportion of students participate in sporting activities after-school.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Teaching and learning in Key Stage 3 are good when students are encouraged to learn independently, think for themselves and evaluate their performance.
- Teaching and Learning are satisfactory in Key Stage 4. Some activities are taught for a relatively short period of time and they lack continuity, which contributes to students only achieving a basic standard of performance.
- Assessment procedures are not firmly embedded in lessons: observations of lessons show that the majority of students are unaware of how well they are doing or what they need to do to improve their performance and attain higher standards.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Teachers make the most of very poor facilities to deliver all statutory requirements in both key stages. They enhance opportunities for students by employing sports coaches to deliver a range of games and dance lessons and make use of local, off-site leisure facilities in Key Stage 4.
- Curriculum time in both key stages is minimal as a result of very limited indoor space and no outdoor sports facilities.
- Students from all year groups engage in some after school enrichment activities at various stages of the year, but few records are kept of which students receive at least two hours of high quality PE and sport within and beyond the curriculum.
- The introduction of sports leadership in Key Stage 4 is proving successful; last year fifteen students achieved the award and have recently led sporting activities for groups of primary-aged pupils.

Quality of leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- A newly appointed subject leader is making a difference by revising PE policy, including schemes of work and developing more effective procedures for assessment.
- Self evaluation is largely accurate but is not used effectively to inform development planning in order to raise achievement in PE.

The impact of the PESSCL national strategy

- The impact of the PESSCL strategy is negligible because the school has not engaged with the school sports partnership and has not used the school sport coordinator to support the development of PE and sport.
- Senior managers show a limited understanding of the aims of the PESSCL strategy and how it can be used to support the development of subject leadership and to enhance curricular and enrichment opportunities for students.

Inclusion

The majority of students make satisfactory progress in PE.

- Students with learning difficulties and disabilities receive effective individual learning support from teaching assistants.
- Curricular and enrichment activities are open to all interested students but they comment that they would like more competition with other schools, especially for those deemed to be gifted or talented sportswomen.
- After school street-dance clubs appeal to a significant number of students of all ages.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensure that assessment procedures are firmly embedded in both key stages so students understand how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve their performance
- continue to support the subject leader in completing an accurate evaluation of the department's strengths and weaknesses and produce a clear and coherent plan for raising achievement in PE
- engage with the PESSCL national strategy, in particular the local school sport partnership to develop subject leadership and enhance the curriculum and enrichment opportunities for all students.

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

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector