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Mr Stephen Jones
Principal
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Dear Mr Jones

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 17 and 18 October to look at work in physical education (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 continuity of learning between key stages.

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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of physical education was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards at Key Stage 3 are good and satisfactory in Key Stage 4.

- Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are at the national average for the majority of students with just over a quarter attaining better than this. This indicates that students' achievement is good from relatively low starting points. Standards and progress in boys' basketball are particularly high.
- Standards in Key Stage 4 core PE lessons observed were satisfactory overall. The school do not record progress of pupils in Key Stage 4; this is a missed opportunity to ensure all pupils are helped to reach their full potential.

- Standards in accreditation courses at Key Stage 4 are in line with national averages overall. Results vary with Btec students consistently attaining better than their targets whereas GCSE results have been below the schools own targets for two years. Girls attain better than boys.
- Students taking Btec courses at Post 16 again attain higher than expected results but results in the higher grades for AS and A level declined slightly last year.
- Students have good opportunities to develop and acquire skills particularly in Key Stage 3 lessons where challenge to improve is good. Good opportunities are made available in some lessons for pupils to select and apply their skills, such as in Year 7 girls rugby and Year 9 dance although this is not consistent across the PE department. In the majority of lessons students are given good opportunities to evaluate and improve their own and others' work. They have good knowledge of health and fitness.
- A range of opportunities are available for students' personal development through PE and they talk with enthusiasm of using junior and community sports leadership skills when working with local primary school pupils. Students have an annual opportunity to evaluate parts of provision such as accreditation courses but there is a missed opportunity to include questions on whole subject provision including the curriculum.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Staff have good subject knowledge that they use well to help students make good progress in their learning especially in Key Stage 3 and accreditation courses. For example in a Year 12 anatomy lesson, students were helped to understand muscle functions because of excellent use of terminology, visual Information Communication Technology prompts and tips in how to link movement to names.
- The majority of lessons include a good range of teaching methods to engage learners. Occasionally teaching is too teacher directed and students do not have enough opportunity to input their own ideas or work out solutions independently.
- The majority of teachers have good question and answer techniques to include all students, challenge their thinking and to check understanding of tasks and learning.
- Where the local authority schemes or work or school recommended strategies are being used, they are leading to more successful lessons. However these are not being used consistently by all members of the department. This is a missed opportunity to place focus on the development and access to the four strands of the PE National Curriculum.
- The new system for assessing students' progress in Key Stage 3 is leading to more of them knowing the next steps in their learning and their individual targets for improvement. National Curriculum levels of attainment are displayed in the PE area although not all staff use these in lessons to motivate students to improve further.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good overall.

- All students in Key Stage 3 and 4 have access to two hours PE in the curriculum. Dance is taught by a specialist teacher through performing arts and students have a good opportunity in Year 9 to select one hour of PE and one hour of dance. Post 16 students do not all have access to PE or extra curricular school sport.
- The curriculum at Key Stage 3 is not broad and balanced because of over dominance of games activities, especially for the boys.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been significantly improved since the last inspection with access to two hours PE and a much greater range of activity choice. Students talk with particular enthusiasm about yoga, judo and kayaking.
- The department is starting to introduce some personalised learning opportunities with a few students to better meet the needs, such as horse riding in Year 8 to develop balance and build self confidence.
- The range of accreditation opportunities is good and has improved with the introduction of vocational and leadership courses. The subject leader is rightly questioning whether the current GCSE syllabus continues to meet the needs of students at the school.
- A good range of extra curricular activities are available. The breadth of this has improved with the introduction of climbing and multi-skills clubs.
- Strong links are in place with some local sports clubs such as football, hockey and table tennis. The department also make good use of local professional teams to inspire and motivate students such as Exeter rugby football club.
- Students feel safe and work well together in small spaces such as the gym for basketball and the dance studio. The majority say how much they enjoy PE particularly the extra curricular programmes and sports trips. The majority have a good understanding of developing a healthy lifestyle, as one girl said 'since we've started to do two hours PE I feel fitter and more toned' .

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The subject leader has a good understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department. His vision and priorities for improvement are very well conceived. The subject development plan reflect this vision well although the urgency and commitment to changes are yet to be secured from across the whole department.
- Some members of the department are piloting local authority schemes of work and using recommended school strategies that are leading to more effective teaching. The subject leader recognises that this good practice needs to be shared more widely to bring about more consistency and a greater range of teaching methods within the department.

- The programme of monitoring and evaluation activities is effective to bring about improvement such as reports to parents and carers.
- A good range of resources is available to support the curriculum and students comment favourably on the injection of new equipment in the last couple of years. The department uses its facilities well and more emphasis has recently been placed on making better use of the local environment, for example the river for kayaking and fields for cycling. Excellent and much needed plans are in place to refurbish and upgrade facilities.

Subject issue

- Currently there is no transfer of data on pupils' achievements or standards in PE between primary and secondary partners. The school sports partnership has plans to introduce this aspect to support planning programmes of study better suited to the needs of Year 7 students.

Inclusion

- All students are included in lessons or alternative provision provided to best meet their needs such as students following the Asdan certificated course.
- The department have appropriate support from teaching assistants for individual students with learning difficulties or disabilities, for example partially sighted students and consequently they make the expected progress. Many students with learning difficulties or disability achieve well in national competition such as cricket and table tennis.
- Good extension activities are provided for higher attaining students in dance and via questioning in PE lessons. Students identified with gifts or talents in PE are encouraged to join local sports clubs.
- Teachers have high expectations of students' behaviour and participation in lessons. The participation rates of Key Stage 4 girls has improved since the introduction of a broader range of activity choice.
- Although the school have a non uniform policy, all students wear PE kit as they have been helped to understand this is for their own health and safety.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring the progress of all students is assessed, especially at Key Stage 4, and that data is used consistently to help all students reach their potential
- ensuring that schemes of work are used consistently within the department
- reviewing the Key Stage 3 curriculum for breadth and balance
- finding ways to share identified good practice more widely within the department.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop physical education 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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Judith Rundle
Her Majesty's Inspector