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06 November 2007

Mr Moran
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Dear Mr Moran

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Monday 15 and Tuesday 16 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 lessons, together with enrichment activities after school.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in PE are good.

- At the end of each key stage an above average proportion of students reach standards that are slightly better than the national expectation. Achievement is good because data collected for these cohorts at the time of entry shows standards were below the national expectation.
- In the work seen, standards were not as high as school data indicates. Girls and boys do equally well.
- Results in GCSE PE and dance have improved each year from 2003 and are now well above the national average. In 2007 the number of students achieving the higher A*-C grades in PE was below the school

average for all subjects but broadly in line with predictions based on prior performance data.

- There has been some fluctuation in the number of students entering and in the results for AS and A level PE, although the pass rate in most years is above the national average. The small numbers that take A-level dance have achieved a 100% pass rate in each of the last three years.
- Standards are particularly good in football, netball and volleyball. In these subjects students demonstrate their ability to apply tactics and analyse performance. In other activity areas seen, the selecting and applying strand of the National Curriculum was weaker. Students have very secure knowledge and understanding of health and fitness.
- The standards in Year 7 are better than in the past and are now in line with the national average. This judgement accords with the school's most recent assessment data.
- Many teams and individual students are successful in a range of sports at local and county level.
- Students' attitudes and commitment to PE are outstanding. They enjoy the subject, are courteous, respectful, work hard and play fair. Levels of participation in lessons and in extra curricular activities are high.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- The conventions of good teaching that include well organised classes, firm control, clearly structured tasks, effective demonstrations and challenging pace were characteristics of all lessons observed.
- Teachers plan clear learning objectives, share them with the students and revisit them during and at the end of lessons. Their good subject knowledge, and experience, allows them to 'pin-point' weaknesses in performance and to provide the necessary advice and support to overcome them.
- Progress is tracked and recorded by subdividing each of the National Curriculum levels. Challenging targets are set and students are informed of what they must do to achieve them. GCSE candidates have areas for improvement identified in the marking process. This good practice is not matched in planning. Schemes of work describe tasks to be covered in each lesson within units and this negates the use of assessment to measure and plan individual and group progress.
- Self-assessment identifies that lessons are often over-directed by teachers. This was the case in most of the teaching observed. Too often students are recipients of instruction rather than being presented with tasks and situations that allow them to make contributions themselves. Closed questioning often fails to make demands on students' thinking skills or use of their responses to shape the learning process.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- All students in Key Stages 3 and 4 receive a minimum of two hours of physical education within the curriculum each week. Dance is taught as part of the performing arts curriculum, increasing the overall time at Key Stage 3 to two and a half hours. Many experience more during extra curricular activities. Ski trips abroad and regular opportunities to travel off-site to provide dance performances are particularly appreciated by students.
- The school is successfully broadening vocational courses through BTEC and is poised to introduce a 'Sport Education' programme.
- AS, A level and leadership courses are popular with sixth form students but there is no provision for optional PE and sport within the curriculum for the great majority not following these courses.
- The range of activities taught in each year across Key Stage 3 is too wide. The 'six-hour' blocks for each activity result in superficial coverage. There is insufficient time to ensure sufficient depth in students' knowledge and understanding of each activity. Two lessons in each week covering different activities further disrupt continuity in learning.
- The lack of leadership training in Key Stages 3 and 4 is a weakness.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- Senior team leaders value PE and sport. They recognise the wider contribution it makes to students' achievement, social development and well-being.
- Leadership within the department is good. The subject leader is very committed and is given excellent support by an enthusiastic, cohesive and hard working team.
- Clear policies, explicit expectations, clarity of roles and good communication ensure that day-to-day organisation is smooth.
- Professional development courses provided through the School Sport Partnership (SSP) has helped the department update on current developments and innovations within the subject. It has allowed the School Sport Co-ordinator (SSCO) to share good practice within school and with local primary and secondary schools. The full impact of recent decisions has still to be seen because the head of the department is relatively new in post.
- Very good use has been made of funding from the Physical Education School Sport and Club Links strategy (PESSCL) to employ outside coaches within and beyond the curriculum to enrich provision.
- The detailed self-evaluation form accurately records strengths and weaknesses in the department and provides an agenda for further development. However, proposals arising from self-evaluation are not always identified as targets, actions or implementation strategies in the subject improvement plan.

- Monitoring and evaluation of lessons within the department has not been sufficiently rigorous to identify some important learning needs.

Continuity between key stages

- The SSP has been structured in a way that is not conducive to continuity in learning between Bishop Walsh and its main 'feeder' catholic primary schools.
- Experience gained from very effective links with one partner primary school has raised awareness of the possibilities for improving continuity in teaching and learning at the time of transfer. Present funding arrangements do not allow for the same level of close consultation with most 'feeder' schools. A positive start was made with one of these schools but extenuating circumstances have delayed progress and it is still too early to see any impact at Key Stage 3.
- The outstanding work with one partner school has seen the development of a whole series of programmes to widen provision and raise standards. As well as increasing curriculum time in Key Stages 1 and 2 to two hours each week, lunch, break and after school sports clubs have been established, a new and balanced curriculum has been planned and help has been given to improve both assessment and teaching in lessons. All this has been achieved within a very short time frame.
- Undertaking baseline assessment at the beginning of Year 7 for setting purposes represents good practice in present circumstances.
- In Key Stage 4 students can make choices from a range of appropriate pathways but there is no opportunity to gain leadership accreditation. Good support and advice is available to students wishing to follow academic, vocational and leadership courses in PE and dance in the sixth form.

Inclusion

- Students are fully included in the curriculum and receive equal entitlement and access in dance and PE. Students with learning difficulties are well supported. However, lesson planning often fails to provide for the wide ability range in each class. Too often work is differentiated by outcome only.
- The PESSCL strategy has increased the range of activities in both the curriculum and in extra-curricular time. This has added further interest, increased motivation and kept levels of participation high.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving provision for sixth form students not following PE and sport related courses
- reviewing curriculum provision and teaching approaches to ensure the efficient use of time to make learning continuous, and to deepen students' knowledge and understanding and their involvement in lessons
- making monitoring and evaluation of lessons more regular and rigorous and using findings to further raise the quality of teaching and learning

- making more use of assessment to plan work for mixed ability classes.

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

I Howard Todd
Additional Inspector