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Mr Brown
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Dear Mr Brown

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 08 and 09 October 2007 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 students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eight parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PE is good.

- By the end of Key Stage 3 students achieve good standards in PE, with good teaching resulting in higher attainment. GCSE results indicate that good standards are attained, with a steadily increasing trend in PE. Standards in Key Stage 4 core PE are satisfactory. The small number of students who take up accredited courses in the sixth form, Sports Studies AS and A2 and Sports Leadership courses, attain well and achieve good success.
- Most students make good progress in their lessons as they learn and develop new skills and demonstrate good understanding. Students make good progress in acquiring and developing skills and in developing their knowledge and understanding of fitness and health. They are less clear about their progress in the other strands of the PE National Curriculum. Very good progress is made in the application of skills to choreography in GCSE dance.

- While many students with talent in PE, as well as those who have learning difficulties and disabilities, are well supported to make progress, there are inconsistencies in how this is managed.
- There are excellent opportunities for students' personal development in PE as sports captains and through taking responsibility for their own learning. They are effective at leading others, making decisions and organising activities. Behaviour in PE is always excellent, and students work very well together in pairs, groups and teams. The quality of co-operative relationships with each other and staff is striking. Kindness, respect for others and a real sense that people care about each other and want to support success characterise the PE department.
- Students' sporting achievements outside school are recognised and celebrated; many use their external sport for GCSE accreditation, often boosting their success.
- Students speak very highly of their experiences in PE and value the contribution their learning makes to other subjects. They also appreciate the work their teachers do to help them improve and achieve.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- PE staff have good subject knowledge and are effective in developing students' skills. They assess students' learning well. A few have excellent questioning skills which are highly effective in developing students' thinking, in challenging ideas and concepts. A rigorous tracking system ensures that students' progress is monitored and that teaching is tailored to meet their needs.
- In the best lessons clear objectives are used effectively to inform learning throughout. Well structured activities ensure that students are able to practise the skills they have learned, apply them in different ways and sometimes evaluate their work. Key words are used well to increase students' PE vocabulary.
- Much of the planning and teaching focuses on the acquiring and developing of skills. There are missed opportunities for students to select and apply skills and to evaluate learning and consequently students are not always clear about their progress in these aspects. Knowledge and understanding of fitness and health are well taught.
- A good range of teaching methods is used to gain students' interest, keep them focussed and on task, for example, peer coaching and learning to referee. However not all lower ability pupils are well catered for.
- The small numbers of students unable to take part in lessons are cooperative and carry out tasks, but teaching does not always engage them in whole class learning so they are able to integrate more easily when they return to practical work.
- Resources are suitable and are well used in lessons, with students taking responsibility for their distribution, use and care.
- Information Communication Technology is underused in lessons, but the school have already identified this for additional resources.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- No students have access to the government target of two hours each week of PE lessons, and data indicates that only 12% access this through participation in extra-curricular activities and sport outside school. The school has plans in place to increase the time available but this is an area for development.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and balanced. Following a recent review, a more appropriate range of games has been introduced.
- In response to student needs, the Key Stage 4 core curriculum now includes a broader range of activities that are beginning to have an impact on engagement and participation. Students report that they are pleased with these changes.
- An appropriate range of accreditation opportunities is available in Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form although the number of students who take them up is small. Sixth form students, other than those in examination groups, have no access to PE, although a successful boys' football team is well established and a girls' netball team is planned.
- Links with other subjects are made well in some areas; for example one student said that her study of the systems of the body in GCSE PE had really supported her learning in science. Some literacy links are clear in the key vocabulary used in every lesson.
- An impressive range of extra-curricular opportunities is available. Recently, new activities have been included and these are successfully attracting larger numbers of students, especially in Years 7 and 8. Good opportunities are available to represent the school at fixtures and tournaments. The department is rightly proud of students who represent their sport at club, county, national and international level.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The head of PE knows the department's strengths well and is able to identify priority improvement areas, for example in teaching and learning, assessment for learning and support for newer staff. The department's self evaluation celebrates success and highlights areas where the department needs to make progress. A comprehensive development plan is in line with whole school planning and articulates clear purpose and direction for the department's work.
- The focus of development in recent years has rightly been on increasing participation. Although this will continue, the department is now ready to focus on improving and broadening learning opportunities and the development of team responsibilities for key areas of work. Professional development opportunities are taken up and ideas shared.
- Senior managers take a strong lead in monitoring activities and using their findings to bring about improvement in provision.
- Assessment, recording and reporting are well managed. Comprehensive data informs teachers and students about achievements and progress against targets and students appreciate how this helps them do their best.
- Resources are well managed as are the excellent facilities; however changing facilities are very limited.

Subject issue - Continuity of learning between key stages

- The work of the recently appointed school sport co-ordinator is having a positive impact on transition from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. Primary staff appreciate the links that have been made, and the transfer of data is being used to better plan for Year 7 students. Older students report that they sometimes repeated previous work; however this is less the case for current Year 7. Although in the early stages, this work is showing signs of success.
- Transition from Key Stage 3 to GCSE and from Key Stage 4 to sixth form courses is very good, with data being used well to support students as they move from one stage to the next.
- Key Stage 3 to core Key Stage 4 PE transition is improving with access to different activities, more suited to needs and interests, particularly of girls in this age group.

Inclusion

- Almost all students are included in PE and are able to access the learning.
- Students who are talented and those who achieve highly are well challenged physically and intellectually. Additional opportunities help extend their capabilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving planning and teaching to include focus on all four strands of the PE National Curriculum
- ensuring all students receive their learning entitlement in PE
- increasing access to two hours high quality PE and school sport for more pupils, in line with government targets.

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 the Ofsted website. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Lucia Devine
Additional Inspector