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19 December 2007

Mr V Goddard
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Dear Mr Goddard

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 and 21 November 2007 to look at work in physical education (PE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas PE, 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 seven parts of lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PE is good.

- Standards on arrival at the school are improving, and pupils in the current Year 7 show average standards. Pupils in Year 9 have achieved well over the Key Stage 3; representing good achievement over time.
- Standards in GCSE PE are above the national average and have steadily increased in recent years. Fewer students achieve the higher grades in

GCSE dance, but improvements in terms of challenge and focussed teaching are in place.

- Available data from Key Stage 2 is used well to inform decisions on how students are grouped for teaching. End of Key Stage 3 data is used very well to personalise pathways to accreditation in Key Stage 4 PE. Through this, almost two thirds of students achieve success in at least one accredited course at GCSE, BTec First or Sports Leadership Level 1. Eleven per cent of the cohort achieved two and a few three different accreditations.
- All students make good progress in their learning. Targeted support for students with learning difficulties and disabilities is offered where possible, both boys and girls achieve well in the subject.
- The assessment system for Key Stage 3 is based appropriately on the four strands of learning in PE, but students' individual targets do not always support their understanding that these are key aspects of the subject.
- There are many opportunities for personal development in PE that students take on willingly. They enjoy the opportunities provided, for example to take on leadership roles in lessons or during the summer school for primary pupils.
- The house system, through which school sports activities and events are organised, promotes positive attitudes and a sense that 'what the individual does counts'. Students in both key stages subscribe strongly to this through their involvement in PE and dance.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Most teaching in PE and dance is good; two outstanding lessons were seen during the inspection, as well as one that was satisfactory.
- Teachers' have excellent subject knowledge, which they use to prepare appropriate learning opportunities for students. This results in effective teaching of sequencing skills, for example in games, where students learn to 'read' the situation and make decisions accordingly.
- Teachers plan the content of their lessons well, and make good use of assessment information to pitch teaching appropriately. Lesson objectives are always set and describe what students 'must' 'could', and 'should' achieve in their work. However, in many lessons the three are not linked clearly, so students do not always understand how the work connects with objectives and progressively builds their learning. Despite this, teachers' good skills ensure that activities in lessons are focussed and that good progress is made in most lessons.
- Assessment for learning techniques are evident in all lessons, an example is the very good questioning skills that teachers use to assess how students are progressing and to support or challenge them further.
- Participation in and engagement with learning in PE is excellent because of good teaching. Interesting, engaging activities ensure that students behave very well and participate fully. The few students who cannot take a full part in practical elements are involved in learning, for example as

umpires or observers, and are often disgruntled at being unable to take part fully.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- All students have access to at least two hours of high quality PE in curriculum time in both Key Stages 3 and 4.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum is broad and meets students' needs very well. There are planned differences in activities between ability groups, with appropriate decisions being made to challenge and support learners. All Key Stage 3 groups have access to the range of activities they need to pursue accredited courses in Key Stage 4.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum is similarly designed to meet needs very well. Students report that they feel well supported as young adults in making healthy lifestyle choices. They appreciate what their time in PE and dance teaches them and recognise that they are being prepared very well for active adult life.
- A broad range of accredited courses is available to students in Key Stage 4: full and short course GCSE PE; GCSE dance; BTec First Diploma in Sport; Sports Leadership and Entry Level Certificate. This very broad and personalised curriculum leads to the impressive number of students who leave the school with accreditation in PE and dance.
- The extra-curricular programme is first class; activities are available before and after school as well as at lunchtime providing a wealth of opportunities for students to participate. Take-up is very high, with about half the school population accessing at least one extra-curricular club in the past year.
- Overall, the PE curriculum impacts very well on Every Child Matters outcomes. Students are enabled to be active for health reasons and taught safe practice; enjoyment of learning is palpable, as is pride in achievement. Opportunities to contribute to the school in and through PE are available for all year groups. For example, Year 8 leaders successfully supporting a primary netball event on the school site.

Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management in PE is good.

- The school's senior management team contains a wealth of PE expertise so is well placed to support improvements in the subject. This enables an accurate view of how the department is progressing and developments are supported well.
- The leadership of PE, provided by the newly appointed acting Head of Department and second in charge, are satisfactory. They are developing their understanding of systems in the school, standards in PE and key improvement areas. However, it is too soon for their leadership to have had real impact to date. Dance is managed well as part of performing arts.

- Self-evaluation is at an early stage and characterises the PE department as young and determined, with a focus on increasing participation in physical activity. This determination exudes from the department's work. Key strengths and areas for development are identified and inform development planning.

Subject issue – Continuity of learning between key stages

- Robust arrangements to support transition in PE from Key Stage 2 mean that most students feel confident about their move to the school and promote continuity in their learning in the subject.
- Transition to Key Stage 4 is well supported. Students are clear about the various pathways to accreditation in PE and dance and are pleased that so much is offered. Decisions on pathways are well managed; despite the extensive planning needed to make the system work.

Inclusion

- All students are included in PE and dance and have full access to school sport.
- There are no differences between the participation of different groups in the school. Girls' engagement is strikingly good.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- clarifying the use of learning objectives so that students know how their learning can progress
- ensuring clear guidance and support for leaders of the PE department so success is maintained and improved.

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