

Alexandra House  
33 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk  
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr R Leighton  
Headteacher  
Sydney Russell Comprehensive School  
Parsloes Avenue  
Dagenham  
RM9 5QT

Dear Mr Leighton

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 26 and 27 November 2007 to look at work in physical education (PE).

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PE is good.

- Students arrive at the school with below average standards in PE and by the end of Key Stage 3 their attainment is broadly in line with the national average. Boys attain slightly better than girls. Data held by the school confirms this position. The system for tracking progress over time enables students to identify their current level of work and target what they need to do to improve.
- Strategies to keep students focussed on learning, such as 'sticky targets' in which the next step is written on a sticky note and given to the student during a lesson, are being introduced, but it is too early to assess their impact.
- Standards in GCSE PE are below national average; however results increased significantly in 2007, representing good achievement for students taking the course. Many more boys than girls study GCSE PE. Numbers taking GCSE dance fluctuate from year to year. Last year numbers were low and only one candidate gained the higher A\* - C grade but the school had accurately

predicted this. GCSE dance numbers are higher in the current cohort and the girls following the course are on track to achieve predicted grades.

- There is no assessment or recording of students' progress in Key Stage 4 core PE lessons. Observations indicate that standards remain broadly average in core PE, indicating that achievement is satisfactory.
- Students are taught in ability classes and this supports most students making progress. Greater challenge was seen in dance lessons than in PE lessons and this is leading to better progress, particularly for students that are more able.
- Behaviour is always good in PE and dance lessons, students are willing to learn, wear appropriate kit and show respect for their teachers and for each other.
- A small group of sixth form students is developing leadership and coaching skills and a few have gained sports leadership accreditation. There are good opportunities for these students to contribute to the community programme at the leisure centre, which some younger students attend.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Most teachers use their subject knowledge well to support students in their learning. Although teaching is good overall, there is a small amount that is inadequate. Where teaching is outstanding, questioning is skilfully used to ensure students are focused, on task and thinking creatively. It draws on students' ability to solve problems, while really thinking and working hard. Inadequate teaching is characterised by work that is too low in expectations and inaccurate lesson objectives, meaning students are unable to identify how their work supports their learning.
- Schemes of work are in place for both PE and dance. While dance schemes of work support planning well, those for PE are not planned to meet the needs of different ability bands. Despite this, some good links are made to National Curriculum levels of attainment during lessons to help students understand how learning contributes to their overall progress.
- Experiences for the small number of non-participants in PE are varied. While they are sometimes fully involved through evaluation or leading, in other lessons they do not have access to their learning entitlement.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate

- The PE curriculum in Key Stage 3 is narrow and primarily focuses on preparation for GCSE PE. Even here, inequalities exist between preparation for girls and boys, such as girls learning netball which is then not offered for the examination, as opposed to basketball which is offered to both genders in GCSE PE but is only taught to boys in Key Stage 3.
- Greater breadth of study is available in Key Stage 4 core PE, including off-site options such as golf and bowling. These are well received by students, who report that they value opportunities to explore sporting activities outside school.
- No students in Key Stage 3 have access to the government target of two hours high quality PE and school sport a week. GCSE PE and dance students have access to the two hours, but the majority of Key Stage 4 have only one hour of PE each week and this year, about a third of pupils in Year 11 have no PE at all.

Students in both key stages report their disappointment with reduced availability of PE and feel this does not support the development of healthy lifestyles.

- Few students access additional time through sporting activities outside the school day. A small number of extra-curricular clubs are available and these offer good opportunities to enrich students' learning. The programme is enhanced because of support from staff other than the PE department.
- Students who take up extra curricular opportunities relish competing in fixtures and tournaments and would like more opportunities to do so. Students also report that they would like to have competitions in school.

## Leadership and management

The quality of leadership and management in PE is satisfactory.

- The leadership of the PE department on a day-to-day basis is sound in terms of management of people, facilities and activities.
- The PE department's self-evaluation, written in response to a recent local authority review, highlights some areas for development that form the basis of the development plan. This makes reference to intended progress, but does not articulate clearly the department's overall aims or vision so the context for the next steps is not clear.
- Loss of PE time is identified as a key issue, but there is no evident consideration of what can be achieved in the time available, or of how the department will ensure that there is no negative impact on achievement.
- The tracking of students' progress is managed well. Target levels in PE and dance are set by senior management for individual students based on their prior attainment and rigorous follow-up by teachers highlights issues such as underachievement. Most teachers follow this up appropriately in their planning or interventions in lessons.
- Input from students to the PE team via the 'Student Voice' email system is beginning to influence management decisions. For example, an extra-curricular basketball club has been set up in response to a request for additional opportunities to take part in competitions against other schools.
- Dance is ably led and managed within performing arts.
- The support of senior managers for PE is having a positive impact in areas such as managing assessment, but is not as effective in terms of the department articulating a clear vision for development including robust areas for improvement.

## Subject issue – Continuity of learning between key stages

- Support for transition in PE from Year 6 to Year 7 through the School Sports Partnership is highly regarded by primary staff. Primary pupils are involved in events, meet staff and visit facilities at the secondary school. It is not clear to what extent this is supporting continuity of learning in the curriculum.

## Inclusion

- There are no significant differences in the participation of different groups of students in Key Stage 3 PE, dance or in Key Stage 4 core PE. More boys take up GCSE PE and girls traditionally opt for GCSE dance.
- The banding system is supporting good learning for all, especially the lower ability groups where numbers are kept small so that these students are helped to make as much progress as they can.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- developing leadership of the department to ensure a clear vision is articulated and robust plans are implemented for development, particularly of the curriculum
- finding ways to meet the government target of two hours high quality PE and school sport
- ensuring schemes of work support planning for progress more consistently.

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