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Mr Saywell
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Dear Mr Saywell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 10 and 11 December 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 learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eight lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- GCSE results have varied from year to year. In 2007, results were average and most students achieved the results expected of them based on their prior attainment. In 2006, results were above average and students achieved better results than those expected.
- Students usually achieve better results in GCSE PE than in most of their other subjects. They achieve more highly in practical elements compared with theoretical aspects of the course.
- Results at A-level are broadly average and most students achieve in line with their prior attainment.

- Standards are in line with national expectations in National Curriculum PE and are improving. Strengths lie in the traditional games. Students learn to evaluate performance satisfactorily and develop the ability to warm themselves up before activity safely. Their knowledge of how to maintain fitness and health is developing, especially since the introduction of a well planned course on fitness in Key Stage 4.
- PE makes a good contribution to students' personal development. Most students enjoy PE and have a positive attitude towards the subject.
- Recent changes to the curriculum have helped to improve students' attendance and participation in lessons, especially for older girls.
- A good proportion of Key Stage 3 students but fewer older students take part in activities out of school hours.
- Students' behaviour in lessons is usually good.

The quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Students make good progress in most lessons. Improved teaching is helping to increase the pace of learning and helping students to catch up on a legacy of slower progress.
- Working relationships between staff and students are very positive. Students very much appreciate the approachability of teachers and their willingness to give extra time to help them to succeed.
- Teachers' secure knowledge of the subject ensures that they give clear demonstrations and explanations, helping learning to take place step by step. Occasionally, subject knowledge is weaker and lessons are not as well structured and are less supportive of progress.
- A common approach to planning based on the department's schemes of work supports progression. Planning does not always include sufficient reference to the four strands of the PE National Curriculum and lesson activities are not always matched closely enough to students' different capabilities.
- Lessons have clear learning objectives so that students know what is expected. Students are increasingly involved in assessing their own and each other's progress.
- Students following exam courses have challenging targets and their progress is assessed regularly and accurately.
- Students find the advice and guidance that teachers give on what to do to improve, both in practical work and in examination theory work, very helpful.
- ICT is being used well to support learning in theory lessons but is used less frequently to support other areas of learning such as analysis of performance.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- The range of activities has been broadened recently, helping to improve the participation and motivation of girls especially. However

there is still a predominance of games activities in Key Stage 3, especially for boys. Currently the renovation work on the sports hall is affecting the range and balance of curriculum activities that can be offered.

- A good range of extra-curricular activities has recently been improved further to include more opportunities that interest girls.
- A satisfactory range of accreditation is offered and includes GCSE PE, AS/ A-level PE and performing arts. There are plans to introduce a vocational course and accreditation for Dance. The proportion of students, especially girls, taking accredited courses is improving but is lower than the national average.
- Junior Sports Leader Award, national governing body officiating awards and the 'Step into Sport' scheme provide good opportunities for students to develop leadership skills.
- The proportion of students in Key Stage 4 involved in two hours of high quality PE is considerably below the national average, but is improving.
- Sixth form students are well provided for and have good opportunities to take part in recreational sport and inter-school competitions.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management are good.

- Secure systems are in place to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the department and self-evaluation is accurate. Consequently priorities are correctly identified and actions plans are well focused and support improvement.
- An enthusiastic team is well led and there is a strong commitment and drive towards improvement. Many new developments are beginning to have an impact on improving students' progress. The curriculum is being broadened; new effective assessment systems have been introduced; leadership courses for students have been successfully introduced; and ICT is beginning to be used more effectively to support learning. These achievements demonstrate a good capacity to improve.
- The commitment of senior leaders and governors to PE and sport is evident in the major refurbishment of the sports hall and the building of a multi use games area, both taking place currently.
- Accommodation includes extensive playing fields, though the amount of litter is hazardous. Some areas of the accommodation are in need of refurbishment such as the gymnasium changing areas and one of the hard playing areas.

Subject issue - continuity of learning between Key Stages

- Many sporting festival and competitions arranged through the School Sport Partnership help primary age pupils to get to know the school staff, students and buildings prior to their start in Year 7.
- There is no transfer of information on pupils' progress, achievements or interests in PE between the primary and the secondary school.

- Schemes of work for Key Stage 3 and 4 support continuity of learning in some areas of the curriculum. They are currently being updated to take account of progression in more strands of the PE National Curriculum.
- Students are well prepared by staff to make realistic choices of PE accreditation in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.

Inclusion

- Students with learning difficulties generally make similar progress to other students. Some achieve well in physical education compared with many of their other subjects.
- Students with particular talents in PE and sport have been identified and additional challenge is provided through extra-curricular provision and links with some local clubs.
- Recent improvements to the curriculum have helped to improve the attendance and participation of older students, particularly girls, though the proportion of girls taking accredited courses, though improving is still low.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- increasing the proportion of older students involved in at least two hours of high quality PE and sport
- increasing the proportion of students, particularly girls, gaining accreditations in PE, sport and/or dance
- making more use of ICT to support learning in PE
- improving schemes of work and lesson planning to take full account of progress in all strands of the PE National Curriculum, and that tasks are well matched to students' differing capabilities.

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

Gillian E. Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector