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Mr Hudson  
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Dear Mr Hudson

### Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 05 and 06 December 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: discussions with staff, students, and scrutiny of departmental documentation. I evaluated the quality of students' coursework and observed thirteen parts of lessons, including GCSE PE and BTec Sport. I also observed students participating in extra curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE was judged good with outstanding features.

### Achievement and standards

Students' achievement is good overall, as is the standard they reach by the end of Key Stages 3 and 4, when set against their starting points, which are broadly average on entry to the school.

- At Key Stages 3 and 4 standards observed during the inspection were above expected levels. This supports teachers' assessments, that 88% of students reach Level 5 or better by the end of Year 9.
- In GCSE PE, 64% of students gained an A\*-C grade, with 16% securing the higher A\* or A grade. Student attainment is on a three-

year rising trend. These latter figures are particularly impressive because all students are now entered for GCSE PE, rather than a small cohort who opt to do it, which is the norm nationally. There is similar success in the optional BTec Sport courses with a 93% and 100% pass rate, for the certificate and diploma respectively. 60% of students gained an A\*-C in GCSE dance in 2007, and several outstanding individuals were observed during the inspection.

- Although there is no marked difference in the relative achievement of different groups of students, or in their achievement in the four strands of PE, boys do less well in the written GCSE exam.
- Standards observed in extra curricular netball, dance and football were above average, and the school has a number of high calibre individual performers and teams who have been successful at county and national level.
- The school makes an outstanding contribution to students' personal development and well-being through PE. Students receive high-quality support and guidance, and consequently develop ambition, confidence, and go on to acquire excellent team working and leadership skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being. Senior students commonly mentor younger students, lead after school clubs, and assist class teachers, particularly in dance. Many other students lead warm up sessions and set out equipment.
- Students' attitudes to learning, behaviour, and attendance are generally very good, facilitated by the strong relationships that exist between students and teachers. However, during the inspection some students in Year 8 indulged in inappropriate behaviour. Participation rates in lessons and extra curricular are very high.

### Quality of teaching and learning

Good teaching is having a good impact on student achievement. At times, teaching is exceptional.

- Planning is meticulous and teachers have high expectations of students. Teachers use their good and sometimes excellent subject knowledge effectively to develop students' knowledge and understanding of a range of PE and sport activities, themes, and concepts.
- The promotion of national strategies to improve students' literacy was evident and students had good opportunities to develop their speaking and listening skills, as well as expand their vocabulary. Teachers use an appropriate range of learning approaches and techniques to stimulate students' interest, including some that involved students taking responsibility for their own learning.
- The best teaching observed was innovative and challenging. It allowed students to think independently, develop creativity, and increase their knowledge, skills, and understanding of PE in an enjoyable and nurturing environment. This was epitomised by role-play in GCSE PE to explore blood doping and the use of performance enhancing drugs in sport.

- Assessment systems are generally rigorous and highly effective overall. There is a well thought out and systematic process of diagnostic, formative and summative assessment, which underpins tracking, monitoring and intervention, where necessary. Consequently, students know how well they are doing, reinforced by frequent self and peer assessment. The PE department effectively adopt the whole-school system for tracking progress.
- Not all teachers use evaluative marking consistently; therefore, not all students receive quality feedback on how to improve their work. Students are not as proficient at applying their skills appropriately in context, as they are at orally demonstrating their understanding.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum, extra curricular and enrichment activities are good overall, with some outstanding features.

- Well-conceived schemes of work and curriculum planning are in place. The curriculum is extensive and well matched to students' needs and interests. All students benefit from wide ranging provision, including a residential PE experience for Year 8 students.
- An extensive enrichment and extra-curricular programme, including inter-form activities and major dance productions supplements curriculum provision. A strong feature of extra curricular provision is the commitment of PE staff, plus some parents and other teachers from across the school being actively involved in organising and supporting activities.
- All year groups apart from Year 9 receive at least two hours of timetabled PE. At Key Stage 4, the school group students by ability to maximise the pace of learning, and this has proved effective. The vocationally oriented BTec sport courses incorporate some good leadership opportunities to compliment those provided within lessons.
- The school is fortunate to have a range of high quality PE accommodation and equipment and this enables staff to deliver a very broad diet of activities. During the inspection, I informed you that the lack of grip on the sports hall floor presented a potential hazard to students.

### Leadership and management of PE

Leadership and management are good with some outstanding features, and contribute well to the good progress students make during their time at the school.

- Self-evaluation is good and PE managers have an accurate picture of the strengths and weaknesses in provision. The implementation of a suitable training and action plan is helping to address identified improvement areas. Through mini inspections of the faculty, senior managers gather invaluable first-hand evidence of the quality of provision.

- The head of faculty is an accomplished practitioner and leads by example. A strong and committed team of colleagues ably supports her and together they form a highly effective team. Good distribution of roles means all teachers feel they have a part to play in managing the department. The faculty leader is judicious in carrying out her responsibilities. Teachers are held to account through performance management. Regular work scrutiny and monitoring of lessons provides her with an overview of teaching quality and its impact on learning.
- Effective leadership and management ensure the faculty runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. A focus on student achievement and engaging learners underpins much of what staff do and this has contributed to rising standards at both Key Stages. The policies and plans in place strike a good balance between providing guidance and allowing teachers some autonomy to personalise the learning experience of students.
- Resources are deployed effectively, and teachers development needs are well managed. Helpful evaluation and reporting systems provide transparency and aid the raising of students' standards and achievement. However, there is an issue with the appropriateness of the current specification for GCSE PE, which needs resolving.
- Capacity to secure further improvements is excellent, based on the progress secured so far.

#### Subject issue- Continuity of learning between key stages

- Good arrangements exist to promote continuity and progression across key stages. This is underpinned by strong links with feeder primary schools, and the sharing of information within school.
- Teachers' use evidence of prior learning to set individual learning targets for students and this helps to ensure expectations and challenges are suitable.
- The work to develop the quality of teaching and learning of PE in primary schools is bearing fruit, as is the transition and bridging work in place, because of the school sport partnership arrangements.

#### Inclusion

- The school promotes an inclusive ethos. Provision is wide ranging and takes account the needs and interests of students, by canvassing their opinion.
- Teaching is made accessible to students because staff employ a range of learning approaches.
- Teachers' planning takes account of the individual needs of students, and on occasion support staff are employed to enrich the learning experiences of students who require extra support and guidance. This includes the most and least able, exemplified by the Junior Athlete Education programme for gifted and talented students, and the support provided for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.

- At Key Stage 4, the school groups students by ability to maximise the pace of learning. The range of non-traditional sports offered opens up PE to those students who are not games oriented through the active lifestyles project, which encourages wider participation.
- Promoting competition, elite performance, and mass participation are not seen as mutually exclusive at this school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- students' achievement in the written component of the GCSE exam, and the suitability of the GCSE specification
- resolving the lack of two hours of PE for Year 9 students
- finding solutions to resolve the inappropriate behaviour of some Year 8 boys.

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

John Young  
Her Majesty's Inspector