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Mr Parker
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Dear Mr Parker

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 12 and 13 November 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 pupils' work and observation of six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good in both key stages.

- Year 11 pupils are on course to achieve well in GCSE PE and Dance.
- GCSE PE results in 2006 were above average. They dipped in 2007 because of instability in staffing which has since been resolved. The 2007 results in GCSE dance were above average. Few pupils gain A*-A grades in either GCSE PE or Dance.
- There are no significant differences between the achievement of girls and boys.

- Pupils make good progress in lessons. They acquire and develop skills at a good rate and select and apply them well in games situations and when choreographing dance. Pupils show good ability to analyse and evaluate their own and each other's performance and know how to warm up safely. They are less secure in what is required to maintain fitness for good health.
- Pupils achieve well in leadership courses. The majority of Year 10 pupils gain either a Junior Sports Leader Award or a Dance Leader Award.
- Pupils enjoy physical education and sport. Attendance and participation in lessons are good.
- A high proportion of pupils are committed to sporting teams, dance activities and participation in extra-curricular. Teams and individuals achieve particularly well in gymnastics, football, athletics and cross-country running.

Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching is good.

- Lessons are well planned and structured. They are well managed and relationships between pupils and staff are very good.
- Teachers set high expectations of pupils' conduct and safe preparation for activity. Teachers have a secure knowledge of the subject and how it should be taught. Demonstrations and explanations are clear and there is plenty of questioning to check pupils' knowledge and understanding.
- Pupils are assessed regularly and accurately. Their progress in each of the four strands of the PE National Curriculum is recorded for each activity. This information is used effectively to set a target for pupils. Pupils know what constitutes good performance at the different levels so know what they must do to improve.
- GCSE work is marked regularly and useful guidance is given on how to improve.
- Occasionally, tasks for the younger pupils are not challenging enough because not enough is known about their achievements in Key Stage 2.
- In a few lessons, pupils that are more able are not given sufficiently challenging tasks.
- Teachers are in the early stages of using information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- A good range of activities meets pupils' interests and needs, especially in Key Stage 4. Leadership courses are a particular strength.
- GCSE is offered for dance and PE and there are appropriate plans to develop vocational courses.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities supports pupils' success in a wide range of sports and encourages participation.

- Not all pupils experience two hours of high quality PE and school sport in Years 10 and 11.
- The school has recently gained the gold award for Healthy Schools.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of PE are good.

- The head of department leads a strong team who work well together and are committed to improving provision and raising standards.
- Senior leaders and the subject leader have an accurate view of the strengths and areas to improve within the subject.
- Systems to monitor and evaluate performance are in place. These are focused too much on examination performance and do not fully recognise the breadth of pupils' achievement in the subject, particularly across the 10 high quality outcomes of PE and school sport.
- Development planning highlights appropriate priorities and actions. The measures of success are not specific and measurable enough.
- Good capacity to improve further is demonstrated in recently improved systems of assessment, schemes of work, and broadening of the curriculum in Key Stage 4.
- Schemes of work are currently being re-written and the new schemes include much clearer reference to progress in all strands of National Curriculum PE.
- Risk assessments are in place for off-site activities but not fully in place for all working areas and activities.
- Accommodation is poor. Working areas are limited both indoors and outdoors including dance being taught in an open access area which is used as a passageway. Some working areas are dirty. Staff and pupils cope very well with these constraints. The school's good level of commitment to PE and dance is evident in the funds allocated to make much needed improvements to the facilities.
- Good displays in corridors and changing rooms supports learning and values pupils' work and contributions.

Subject issue

- Many primary age pupils take part in activities organised by the school sport co-ordinator. These help pupils to become familiar with staff, older pupils and the school site prior to starting in Year 7.
- Little formal information is gathered about pupils' achievement in PE before they start in Year 7. This leads to expectations that are too low in some Year 7 lessons.
- Pupils are well prepared to make a suitable choice of examination course in Key Stage 4.
- Pupils in Key Stage 4 are made aware of PE and sport related courses available in local colleges although are not fully aware of the full range of career opportunities related to PE, dance and sport.
- GCSE PE pupils benefit from taking part in a PE conference held at a local University.

Inclusion

- Pupils with learning difficulties are included in lessons and make similar progress to all students.
- Girls and boys are well provided for though there are very few boys involved in the GCSE Dance course and their experience of dance in the curriculum is more limited than that of girls.
- A good proportion of gifted and talented pupils have been identified within the subject but the list is not yet comprehensive. Many extra-curricular opportunities and links with local clubs provide support for talented pupils.
- Activities provided by the partnership for gifted and talented pupils have been used by the school but are not yet fully embedded.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- providing greater challenge for more able students and increasing the proportion of students reaching the highest grades in GCSE
- ensuring that all pupils have access to at least two hours of high quality PE and school sport per week
- carrying out risk assessment of all working areas and activities
- developing the use of ICT to support teaching and learning
- developing systems for monitoring and evaluation in the subject to reflect pupils' broader achievement in PE, dance and sport.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop subject 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 Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector