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Dear Mrs Keller-Garnett

Ofsted survey inspection programme – PE and D&T

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during our visit on 06 and 07 February 2008 to look at physical education (PE) and design and technology (D&T) in Key Stages 4 and 5.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of PE, the visit had a particular focus on assessing the PE contribution to the outcomes of Every Child Matters, particularly 'being healthy'. In the case of D&T, the inspection programme enabled us to survey specific issues, to track the impact of recent initiatives and to investigate the need for future developments.

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 lessons in both D&T and PE.

### Physical Education

The overall effectiveness of Physical Education (PE) was judged to be good, with outstanding features.

## Achievement and standards

Students' achievement and the standards they reach are good overall, considered against their attainment on entry which is broadly average.

- Standards in core Key Stage 4 PE provision are broadly average, while they are good in GCSE PE and outstanding at A Level. Examination results over the past three years have been consistently above national averages, particularly for the proportion of students reaching the highest grades. In addition, a minority of very able students have gained international recognition in activities such as rugby, basketball, dressage, martial arts, karting, and cricket. Many other students represent the county.
- Over the past three years, very large cohorts of boys and girls have been equally successful at GCSE and A Level PE. In 2007, however, a number of girls underachieved at GCSE level, and this is a cause for concern. Minority ethnic students and students with learning difficulties and or disabilities achieve in line with others in the school, developing the four strands of PE equally well.
- Booster and revision sessions, course notes on the intranet and personal mentoring are some of the effective ways staff support and guide students. It is very apparent that the longer staff have to work with students, the greater their impact, and this accounts for some of the variance in achievement.
- Most students have excellent attitudes to learning and demonstrate exemplary behaviour. However, in two of the lessons observed attendance was poor. Students' personal development through PE is good, and includes volunteering and leadership opportunities through the step into sport programme.

## Quality of teaching and learning of PE

In the small number of lessons seen, students were making good and occasionally outstanding progress because of good teaching.

- A well-balanced team of specialist teachers uses their excellent subject knowledge to promote good and occasionally excellent learning. Staff make good use of a range of appropriate resources and learning approaches to facilitate students' progress. Interactive PowerPoint presentations, video clips from You Tube and digital cameras for analysis and observation work help to engage and motivate most students, as do the opportunities for students to work independently.
- Good relationships between staff and students lead to a purposeful learning climate. Staff have high expectations of students, which in turn promotes high student aspirations.
- Lessons are well conceived and the best teaching was innovative and challenging, including a re-creation of the circulatory system, which

students had to navigate to demonstrate their understanding of the flow of blood around the body.

- The promotion of national literacy and numeracy strategies was evident and students were encouraged to develop their speaking, and listening skills, enhance their vocabulary, and further develop their measurement and problem solving capacities.
- Self and peer assessment, along with constructive feedback from staff served to give students an appreciation of the quality of their own and others' work, as well as signposting areas for further development. The faculty has developed a coherent system of initial, on-going, and final assessment, with regular tracking and target setting built-in. This is particularly effective for exam courses. However, there are issues with the clarity of the assessments used to show progress in core Key Stage 4 provision.

### Quality of the PE curriculum

Curriculum provision is outstanding overall. It is unusually broad, balanced, and inclusive.

- The core Key Stage 4 PE programme, which includes an options element, is well suited to students' interests. As a result, the proportion of students who study GCSE and A level PE is well above average. Many students go on to take sport and sports-science related degrees at university. The post-16 programme unusually includes core provision rather than just an optional enrichment programme. The school is also introducing the more vocationally oriented Btec diploma. Schemes of work and curriculum opportunities are very good overall and well balanced.
- There is extensive extra curricular provision, including residential experiences and well established 'house competitions'. There are also a host of non-traditional and leisure based opportunities. Some good club links and involvement with the school sport partnership has opened additional routes for students to participate and progress in a range of sports and activities.
- The PE faculty has established effective links with English, technology and languages departments that enable students to reinforce their learning across these areas.
- PE accommodation, equipment, and resources are very good, including an on-site swimming pool and large floodlit all-weather area. The recent addition of dedicated PE classrooms enhances provision further.
- Good arrangements exist to promote continuity and progression across key stages, underpinned by strong links with feeder high schools and on-going work through the school sport partnership.
- Despite the overall quality of the curriculum, the school does not provide two hours of timetabled PE for non-exam classes each week.

## Leadership and management of PE

Leadership and management are good, with a number of outstanding elements.

- The head of faculty demonstrates strong leadership and organisational capacities. He leads by example, and with your full support has assembled a strong team of highly effective and committed teachers, who together ensure that the faculty operates efficiently on a day-to-day basis.
- Robust performance management, rigorous monitoring, and evaluation of all aspects of provision ensure that the head of faculty and senior managers have a realistic overview of the strengths and areas for further development. Moreover, there are coherent plans to remedy identified shortcomings. Responsibilities are increasingly being devolved successfully throughout the faculty.
- There is a strong emphasis on raising student achievement. This has been underpinned by careful target setting, tracking procedures and suitable intervention where necessary. Good planning to reinforce national literacy and numeracy strategies is a feature of the faculties work.
- Resources are effectively deployed, and staff receive good opportunities to continue their professional development. Most recently, this has focused upon dance, the new diploma course, and the implementation of the new National Curriculum for PE.
- Good progress since the last inspection and the quality of the PE team give confidence that there is good capacity to improve further.

Subject issue - PE contribution to the outcomes of Every Child Matters, particularly 'being healthy'

- Good collaboration between PE, PSHCE, and the science faculty ensure students are very aware of the benefits of following active and healthy lifestyles.
- The school has gained national Healthy Schools accreditation and as evidenced previously, the PE faculty provides students with extensive opportunities to participate in and develop understanding of aspects of their social, emotional, and physical well-being.
- The diversity of curriculum provision is part of a deliberate strategy to encourage students to find activities that they enjoy and can continue participation into adulthood.

## Inclusion

- Provision is inclusive and supports the development of the vast majority of students, including the most and least able. The faculty achieves this by carefully matching the curriculum to students' needs and interests, and allowing them some freedom of choice. In addition,

during lessons staff make good use of adapted equipment, learning aids, and learning styles to promote good progress among students.

- Mentoring of talented students takes place alongside a pilot project to boost the attendance and behaviour of a cohort of 30 disaffected students. It uses sport and team working challenges to motivate and engage them in school, and boost their confidence and self-esteem.
- All students gained a pass at GCSE and A Level PE in 2007.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring all students receive two hours of timetabled PE per week
- addressing the relative underachievement of some groups of girls
- refining the clarity of assessment evidence to better demonstrate the standards reached and the progress made by core Key Stage PE students
- tackling the issue of poor attendance in some PE lessons.

## Design and Technology

The overall effectiveness of Design and Technology (D&T) was judged to be good with outstanding features.

### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are good with outstanding features.

- Attainment in D&T when pupils start at the school in Year 10 is average. It is rising, largely as a result of the feeder schools gaining technology college status. For example, many students have started this year with a good understanding of computer aided design.
- Students make good progress including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, and the 2007 results are above average. The number of students gaining higher GCSE grades competes well with the best performing subjects in the school and predictions for D&T GCSE results in 2008 show a significant increase. Girls are not achieving as well as boys at Key Stage 4 and the school is closely monitoring individual progress.
- D&T results vary significantly across the specialist areas from well above average in electronics and graphic products to below average in engineering. The right action is being taken to improve consistency. Very good achievement and standards were seen in Year 11 work, confirming the trend of improvement towards excellence.
- The contribution of D&T to the personal development and well being of students is an outstanding feature. They quickly take responsibility for their own learning and thoroughly enjoy designing and making products. The way students manage individual project work is exemplary.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning in D&T is good with outstanding features.

- Teaching and learning seen was consistently good or better in all specialist areas. The highest quality can be found when students are engaged on individual projects and this is an outstanding feature. Another is the high level of intellectual challenge made by teachers when studying design, for example when learning about ergonomics in a Year 10 lesson.
- Students have high regard for teachers' specialist knowledge which commands much respect and results in sustained concentration for long periods of time in lessons. The quality of teamwork and the ethos to provide the best life chances with the maximum amount of enjoyment is exemplary.
- Assessment data is rigorously analysed to ensure students make the progress they should and swift action is taken to intervene when they do not. Students are provided with frequent high quality feedback on how to improve.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good with outstanding features.

- The very good curriculum includes all D&T specialist areas and meets the interests of students well. The range of materials, components, and equipment used to design and make products is an outstanding feature, from use of hardwoods, good quality textiles to the most up to date microelectronics and computer aided design software.
- Promoting creativity through design is at the heart of the curriculum and contributes extensively to the enjoyment of learning. The school is looking to extend vocational course provision to the already wide range of options which have designing at the core.

## Leadership and management of D&T

Leadership and management of D&T are excellent.

- The performance of D&T continues to improve as a result of close monitoring. The right actions are taken to make sure momentum is maintained and the shared vision by leaders and managers at all levels is excellent.
- Self evaluation is highly effective and rigorous. The subject is moving in the right direction and is well set to be an outstanding provider in the near future. The school's capacity to ensure D&T can thrive is

excellent and is significantly helping raise achievement and standards to the highest levels.

### Inclusion

The achievement of girls is already improving and all other groups of students are equally involved in D&T work.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving the consistency of results in the specialist areas.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE and D&T in the school.

As we explained in our 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