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Mrs Powell
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Dear Mrs Powell

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 03 and 04 March 2008 to look at physical education (PE) and design and technology (D&T) in Key Stage 3.

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 (ECM), particularly being healthy. In the case of D&T, the inspector surveyed specific issues relating to subjects and aspects of the curriculum, tracked the impact of recent initiatives, and investigated 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.

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement and the standard they reach are good. This is because they make good progress from average to above average skills, knowledge, and understanding of PE.

- By Year 9, 91% of students reach level 5 or better, which exceeds the national average. A minority reach exceptional standards and former students include the England and British and Irish Lion's rugby union captain. Other students go on to attain county and national standard in a range of activities. However, there is a degree of inconsistency within year groups, and in students' development of the four strands of PE, students' theoretical understanding being generally better developed than their practical application and capacities. There is no major difference in boys' and girls' achievement, and minority ethnic students and students with learning difficulties achieve in line with others in the school.
- Students receive high quality support and guidance from staff, and this underpins the largely good relationships that exist between them. Most students relish learning and are well behaved. However, on occasions the silly behaviour of a minority can slow the pace, and waste valuable lesson time. Through PE, students receive good opportunities to develop leadership and team working skills.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

In the small number of lessons seen, most students were making good progress because of good teaching and their positive attitudes to learning.

- Teachers' good subject knowledge together with thorough planning and an enthusiastic delivery style usually helps to engage students in learning. Good use is made of a range of learning approaches, with the most effective being those where students can take responsibility for their own learning, and acquire skills, knowledge, and understanding of PE through interactive experiences.
- Another positive feature is the reinforcement of students' literacy and numeracy development, with built-in speaking and listening elements, vocabulary extension and mental arithmetic and problem-solving activities.
- Although the head of department has piloted the use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) in PE, the department have not as yet fully exploited the schools specialist technology status.
- Students have good opportunities to develop evaluative skills through peer and self-assessment. Current assessment procedures include a good tracking component so that students have good awareness of how well teachers think they are performing, and how to improve further. However, at present procedures do not accurately reflect students overall capacities in PE across all activity areas.

Quality of the PE curriculum

Curriculum provision is good overall.

- In addition to meeting National Curriculum requirements, the department allows students to opt for additional timetabled activities, including martial arts, swimming and outdoor and adventurous activities. A weakness of core provision is the disproportionate allocation of time for games activities in Years 8 and 9.
- Extra-curricular activities include regular inter-form and inter-school competitions and after school clubs. There are annual ski trips and students can go to an outdoor pursuit centre. Students also benefit from various activities organised as part of the school's involvement with the local sports partnership, including multi-skills, boxercise, trampolining, and squash. Presently, the most able students do not have formal opportunities to extend their learning through accelerated or fast track routes, such as early entry for GCSE PE.
- Whilst Year 9 students receive two and a half hours of PE weekly, students in Years 7 and 8 receive less than two hours. Links with partner primary schools have been strengthened because of effective liaison work undertaken through the school sports partnership.
- PE accommodation and resources support the delivery of the programme well.

Leadership and management of PE

Leadership and management are good.

- The new head of department is effective in his role and receives good support from his experienced and committed colleagues in the department. Consequently, the department runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. All the expected management policies and procedures are in place, and curriculum plans and schemes of work are of a good quality.
- Raising standards is a high priority and managers assure this through careful tracking and suitable intervention. Staff take advantage of good opportunities to continue their professional development.
- Systematic performance management, rigorous monitoring, and evaluation of all aspects of provision ensure that staff are held to account for the quality of their work. This also ensures that the head of department and senior managers have a realistic overview of the strengths and areas for further development. Scrutiny of department action plans reveals that they have begun to take effective steps to address identified weaknesses.
- Staff make best use of available resources to achieve good value for money and the department has good capacity to continue improving.

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

- As a nationally accredited 'healthy school', there is a commitment to raise student awareness of the benefits of adopting healthy lifestyles.

- Healthy meal options at lunchtime and encouraging large numbers of students to walk and cycle to school are examples of the efforts made.
- Effective cross-curricular links with science and personal, social and health and citizenship (PSHCE) help PE staff to reinforce and develop students' physical, social, emotional health and well-being during lessons. All Year 7 students benefit from a whole day dedicated to raising their awareness of 'Healthy Living'. The school has gained the Sportsmark award in recognition of the high proportion of students who participate in all the activities provided.

Inclusion

- The school promotes a 'sport for all' ethos, which sets out to widen participation and encourage all students to experience a degree of success through PE and sport. A combined programme of curriculum, enrichment and additional activities support this aim. As do the use of different learning approaches, adapted equipment and different challenges tailored to individual student needs.
- Targeted groups of disengaged boys and girls have benefited from specialist tuition and mentoring to 'rediscover' a passion for physical activity.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- eliminating the silly behaviour of a small minority of students during some lessons
- reducing the imbalance towards games activities in the PE curriculum
- ensuring judgements on students' standards take equal account of development in all the activity areas studied.

Design and Technology

The overall effectiveness of D&T was judged to be good.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are above average.

- Students arrive in Year 7 when standards are about average. By the end of Year 8 standards have risen and are just above average. At the end of Year 9 standards are above average overall. This represents good progress. Girls' attainment is better than boys'.
- Design work is of a good standard overall and is generally well presented, for example, students' 3D modelling in ProDesktop. Students' skills of evaluation are well developed. The quality of making is high with attention to accuracy and finish, for example, the design and manufacture of "Graffiti Bags".

Quality of teaching and learning

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

- In all of the classes observed students found the work stimulating. They enjoyed and engaged in the activities because all teachers are enthusiastic and have high levels of specialist subject expertise. One outstanding lesson was seen.
- Lessons are planned carefully and take into account opportunities for differentiated learning activities. In lessons, teachers provide a rich variety of activities and make frequent checks to ensure that students understand their work.
- The department benefits from modern, high quality ICT resources and teachers make effective use of these resources to support learning, for example, in the design of promotional animation clips in Year 9 graphics.
- Assessment is rigorous and marking is accurate. Teachers give students good guidance on how to improve their work on feedback sheets. Self and peer assessment are developing well. The tracking of students' progress is developing well but some students are still not aware of their National Curriculum level. Students are aware that they have targets but are unclear about the detail.

Quality of curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- Units of work are carefully selected to provide students with a firm foundation of understanding and skills in Year 7. There is clear progression through the generic skills of designing. Outstanding attention is paid to ICT and design folios display a variety of high quality computer aided design work (CAD), using a wide range of software. The application of the school's numeracy and literacy policies is well developed in schemes of work.
- All students can undertake the Crest Award through their work in electronics. The department is taking the lead in the QCA/Year of Food and Farming which makes strong curriculum links with the humanities, science and citizenship. Students are enthusiastic competitors in the Future Chef competition. These opportunities are highly valued by students and represent outstanding curriculum enrichment.
- There are excellent links with primary schools and the upper school. Students in feeder schools have taster sessions in Year 5, the department provides Year 6 students with extension work involving art, and D&T. Students in Year 9 are prepared well for making their DT

GCSE course choice and begin work on bridging tasks towards the end of the school year, once option choices have been made.

- Technology College funding has made much of this provision possible.

Leadership and management

Leadership and management of D&T are good.

- The department is well managed by the recently appointed head of department who leads an innovative team. There are well defined policies and procedures to steer future developments. Departmental self-evaluation is accurate.
- Development points are appropriately reflected in the department's development plan and senior managers review these regularly.
- Information on student perceptions of D&T is used well to inform self-evaluation. New teachers are well supported by their colleagues.

Inclusion

Every student has access to all provision in D&T. Students' individual education plans are used when planning lessons together with provision for gifted and talented students. Students have good support provided by teaching assistants and learning support assistants. All students can choose to be involved in enrichment activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- closing the gender gap by increasing the numbers of boys achieving National Curriculum levels 6 and 7
- consolidating the student tracking system so students have greater awareness of their targets for improvement.

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 Inspectors