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Mr P Tapp  
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Dear Mr Tapp

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 and 05 February 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 assessing the PE contribution to the outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM), particularly being healthy.

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 six lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in PE are satisfactory.

- In 2007 GCSE results were slightly above the national average. Over the past three years there has been a rising trend in the percentage of girls achieving the higher A\*-C grades. Poor results in theoretical work have led to a decline in the number of boys achieving the higher grades. Their results are now below the national average.
- At the end of Key Stage 3 and in Year 10 an average proportion of students achieve standards close to the national expectation. The

standards achieved by boys are slightly below the national expectation but not as low as teacher assessment data indicates.

- Progress at Key Stage 4 is limited because students following the core programme only receive ninety minutes of PE per week rather than the recommended two hours.
- Results at AS and A Level are well below average. The school has correctly identified the synoptic study as being a particularly weak area. The AS/A Level course is not well suited to some of the students taking it.
- In the work seen, students had secure subject knowledge and understanding in swimming and health and fitness. Girls were able to analyse a performance and provide helpful suggestions for further improvement. For example, in an aerobics lesson they refined their own group routines by demonstrating how changes in direction and spatial relationships could influence the overall intent.
- A small percentage of students demonstrate skills above the expected level in a number of activity areas and several have represented the school in regional and county events.
- Students' attitudes and commitment to PE are very good. They enjoy the subject. This is reflected in the high levels of participation in lessons and in extracurricular clubs. A wide range of new activities have been introduced through the PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy. These new opportunities have increased motivation, especially among older girls who have stayed involved and become more active.

## Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Although teaching and learning was judged satisfactory overall, in the limited number of lessons seen during the visit it was good. The conventions of good class management, firm control and high expectations typify all lessons.
- Lesson planning is detailed and there is good pace to learning. Learning objectives and specific outcomes are shared with the students and it is against these outcomes that short-term progress and achievement is measured. In one lesson the objectives were too broad and the activities that followed had no clear focus. Consequently, it was impossible to identify any learning progress by the end of the session.
- In the best lessons, students were invited to contribute their own ideas and views. Their suggestions were valued and used in progressive tasks to help deepen knowledge and understanding. In these lessons students worked with high self-esteem and there was an industrious atmosphere in the work place.
- Weekly department meetings on teaching and learning are helping to build a shared team ethos and spread good practice. Strategies to foster independent learning and to deepen understanding through effective questioning and problem solving activities are having a positive impact in lessons.

- The use of Information Communication Technology (ICT) is embryonic. It was used effectively in a trampoline lesson to help individual students identify where they could improve their technique in performing simple re-bounce jumps.
- With the exception of Key Stage 4 core PE, students' progress is closely tracked. The head of department is aware of weaknesses in moderation in Year 9 and in partner middle schools.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- In Year 9 all students experience two hours of curriculum PE each week. In Years 10 and 11 this allocation is reduced to ninety minutes and in the sixth form there is no provision for students not following accredited courses.
- The number of students wishing to take GCSE PE in the next two years has increased significantly. The size of each cohort is above the national average.
- Almost one third of all students benefit from participation in a wide range of extracurricular activities, numbers have increased rapidly in the last year. Although the PESSCL strategy has only been in operation for a short period, it has made a significant impact by widening the range of activities available and increasing the number of students actively involved. The students recognise and appreciate the range of sports they can now participate in.
- New schemes of work are helping to establish curriculum continuity and consistency between partner middle schools and the upper school. They also provide the guidance from which a more accurate assessment of National Curriculum levels can be made.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum promotes sport education and opportunities for leadership and volunteering but at present there is no accredited vocational opportunity.

## Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management in PE is good.

- Senior managers are committed to PE and Sport. They value the contribution it makes to students' personal development and overall achievement. They are aware that the curriculum time allocated to the subject is below the government target for Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- The high quality leadership and enthusiasm of the subject leader together with the commitment and hard work of other members of the department is leading to improved provision. However, it is still too early to see the impact of recent actions on overall standards and achievement.
- The subject leader has a clear vision for the subject. Self-evaluation of strengths and weaknesses is detailed and accurate. The data being collected together with the outcomes from monitoring and evaluation

of lessons is helping to establish the main priorities in a robust development plan.

- Good links have been established with PESSCL partners and the capacity for further improvement is good.

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

PE makes a significant contribution to the outcomes of ECM.

- The school is committed to encouraging a healthy life style for students during and beyond the time that they attend school. Senior managers have already taken action to promote healthy eating, and to meet the criteria set out in the physical activity strand of their application for the Healthy School standard. They recognise that more remains to be done to ensure that current practice matches stated aims.
- Changes to the PE curriculum and widening of the extra-curricular programme have increased levels of participation and enjoyment. The students themselves recognise the importance of physical activity and take the view that provision for PE in the sixth form is essential.
- The School Sport Partnership encourages safe and active participation in sport and the involvement of young volunteers and leaders. Students following the PESSCL leadership programme are excellent role models for younger children in local first and middle schools. Their engagement with coaching and organising festivals and events is providing essential leadership experiences that could ensure economic well-being in later life. Cross-phase activities are engaging students in decision making and planning that ensures the involvement of all children, including those with learning difficulties.

Inclusion

- Students with learning difficulties are given appropriate help and support.
- 'Big Lottery Funding' is being used efficiently to set up activity sessions for a variety of vulnerable groups and young people disadvantaged by their rural location.
- The PE curriculum offered at Key Stage 4 does not meet the diverse needs and interests of all students.
- Too few lessons use assessment of learning to plan and provide activities that are suitably matched to the wide ability groups in most classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring all students have at least two hours of curriculum PE in Years 10 and 11 and that provision meets their diverse learning needs
- making curriculum provision for PE and sport available in the sixth form for students not following PE and sport accredited courses
- tracking the progress of students following the core PE programme in Key Stage 4

- raising standards in GCSE and AS/A Level theoretical work.

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

I Howard Todd  
Additional Inspector