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Mr A Pickering  
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Dear Mr Pickering

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 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, 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 seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of physical education was judged to be good with several outstanding features.

#### Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards in PE are good.

- GCSE results in physical education and dance were well above the national average in 2007. Over the past three years results have fluctuated. In 2007 the number of students achieving the higher A\*-C grades in PE improved but this was lower than the target the school set for itself. Girls and boys do equally well.
- By the end of Year 9 and in Year 10 a high proportion of students achieve standards above, and sometimes well above, the national

- expectation. However, on the evidence of work seen, standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are not as high as teacher assessment indicates.
- Achievement is very good because most students make better than average progress when compared to baseline assessment in Year 7.
  - Results in A Level PE are similar to the school average for all subjects. In most areas of the PE course students perform in line with expectations. In AS Level dance, standards are lower. In 2007 no students achieved A or B grades in dance.
  - Many teams and individuals are very successful in a range of sports. Staff and students show outstanding commitment to extracurricular activities.
  - In the work seen, standards in invasion games, trampolining and dance were good. From an early age students have a secure subject knowledge and understanding of fitness and health. In gymnastics, students' skills involving jumping, rolling and balance often showed poor control and their sequences on apparatus lacked flow, precision and creativity.
  - In most activities students demonstrate the ability to analyse performance and suggest improvements to their own and others' work. Their ability to select and apply their own ideas is the weakest strand of the PE National Curriculum.
  - Almost all students' attitudes and commitment to PE are outstanding. They enjoy lessons, co-operate well and take part enthusiastically. They particularly appreciate and enjoy the friendly nature of the inter-house competitions. Students involved in leadership courses are excellent role models. They value the training they have received and have put this to very good use by running physical activity sessions and festivals for local primary schools.

## Quality of Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good

- The conventions of good teaching observed in almost all lessons included, efficient organisation, firm control, well-structured progressions and productive use of time.
- A wide range of teaching styles was evident in both practical and theory work. One particularly good feature was the regular and purposeful use of individual whiteboards for students to record information in different contexts. This approach always resulted in reinforcing knowledge and understanding of learning in an unobtrusive way.
- Students particularly enjoy the very successful approaches to learning in GCSE, BTEC and A Level theory lessons. They are challenged to think for themselves, share views with their peers and apply their own knowledge in a practical context. Very good use is made of information and communication technology (ICT) in theory lessons.
- Use of ICT in practical sessions was less evident, although in a trampoline lesson the digital video recorder was used very effectively

to stimulate a meaningful discussion on how to improve technique in a number of rebound skills.

- Teachers make good use of their subject knowledge and demonstrations to 'pin-point' strengths and weaknesses in individual performances. Learning objectives are shared with students and outcomes are reviewed and assessed through appropriate plenary activities.
- Apart from in KS4 core PE, students' progress is assessed and tracked closely. However, the students themselves only have a partial understanding of what they should do to reach the next level of learning.
- Praise is not always used judiciously and there are too few opportunities for students to contribute and use their own ideas in lessons.

### Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- In Key Stages 3 and 4 all students receive two hours of curriculum PE each week. In the sixth form there is provision for one hour of PE each week. The programme is broad and balanced and meets statutory requirements. There is an opportunity for students to select activities in Year 11.
- A very high proportion of students take accredited courses in PE. The school offers a vocational course in the sixth form and is looking to extend this to Key Stage 4. AS and A2 physical education are also popular courses. The PE, School Sport and Club Links (PESSCL) strategy has helped by providing a further dimension to the programme through leadership training and courses that lead to Governing Body Level One qualifications. A large number of students enter and progress through the levels of The Duke of Edinburgh's Award and benefit from the unique contribution that this programme provides.
- Extracurricular provision is outstanding. Inter-school and inter-house fixtures and non-competitive experiences are provided for all ages in a very wide range of activities. The PESSCL strategy has further increased the already broad range of activities. The number of students involved has increased in each of the last three years. Trips and expeditions abroad are especially appreciated.

### Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management in PE is good.

- Senior leaders value PE and sport, recognising the contribution it makes to overall achievement and personal development.
- The subject leader is very committed to improvement and has efficiently introduced a number of changes to 'modernise' the department in recent years. She is very well supported by a dedicated and hard-working team that have clear roles and responsibilities.

- Self-evaluation through the annual review of performance against the targets for sport and PE in the specialist school plan is an accurate assessment of strengths and weaknesses. There is a clear view of what further can be done to improve quality and provision but there is no specific development plan showing how this will be achieved.
- The department benefits from regularly sharing good practice through meetings and team teaching. More formal monitoring and evaluation of teaching and learning in lessons by the department itself is too infrequent.

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

PE makes an outstanding contribution to the outcomes of Every Child Matters (ECM)

- The importance of enjoyable, active and safe participation underpins everything the PE department does.
- Almost all students enjoy the subject and understand the importance of physical activity and diet in a healthy lifestyle. They are aware that they are extremely fortunate to attend a school where PE and sport is given such a high profile and where indoor and outdoor facilities are excellent. The great majority take advantage of the opportunities offered.
- The wide enrichment programme ensures there are activities to suit most students' tastes. Additional activities provided through the PESSCL strategy have helped to ensure students in danger of losing interest, especially girls, stay involved and active.
- Units of work in Key Stages 3 and 4 give appropriate attention to the importance of physical activity in helping to promote good health. Students working on accredited courses cover this work in much greater depth.
- Students following the leadership programme and involved in coaching and organising festivals for primary age children are gaining experiences through volunteering that could provide economic well-being in later life.

Inclusion

- Students have equal access and entitlement to the curriculum. The department has the help of a classroom assistant offering very good support to students with learning difficulties.
- Gifted and talented students are identified. Many benefit through participating in school teams and local sports clubs. It is the intention of the department to progress this work further through the Junior Athlete Education (JAE) programme.
- Assessment of learning in lessons is not always used to provide differentiated tasks, particularly to challenge the most able.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- keeping records of students' progress in core physical education in Key Stage 4
- providing a subject development plan based on annual self-evaluation and the outcomes of monitoring and evaluation of lessons
- ensuring work in lessons is carefully matched to different ability groups and uses contributions made by the students themselves.

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