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Mrs C Brooker  
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Dear Mrs Brooker

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 22 and 23 September 2008 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 seven lessons.

The overall effectiveness of physical education was judged to be satisfactory

Achievement and standards

Achievement in PE is satisfactory in both key stages.

- At the end of Key Stage 3 and in Key Stage 4 standards overall are close to national expectations. For Key Stage 3 this is not as high as teacher assessment data indicates. A small proportion of students demonstrate skills above the expected level in invasion games.
- In 2007 the number of students achieving GCSE A\* to C grades and the higher A\* and A grades was well below the national average. Prompt action was taken by senior managers and the new subject

leader to address poor performance. An improved tracking system and additional revision classes were introduced and this has made an immediate impact on unvalidated results for 2008. The number of students achieving A\* to C and A\* and A grades shows a marked improvement and the difference in the low performance of boys when compared to that of girls has been removed.

- The majority of students make satisfactory progress although most are capable of making more progress than at present.
- The focus on improving fitness and health, which starts from the time of entry to the school, results in students making very good progress in this aspect of the National Curriculum programme of study.
- Students have good opportunities to make judgements about their own and others' performance and make helpful suggestions on how the quality of work can be improved. However, there are too few occasions when they can use their own thoughts and ideas in making tactical decisions and engage with problem solving activities.
- Students with learning difficulties are given additional support. They make good progress overall.
- Gifted and talented students are identified on a register, although not all are aware that the register exists or if their name is included. Most talented students benefit from their participation in school teams and through representation in the junior teams in local cricket, football, hockey, and rugby clubs. However the work in lessons is not regularly planned to provide tasks suited to their particular needs.
- Students' attitudes and commitment to PE are very good. They respond quickly to instructions, persevere with tasks and cooperate well with each other. Participation rates are very high.

### Quality of teaching and learning

The quality of teaching and learning is satisfactory.

- Two thirds of observed lessons were satisfactory, the remaining third were good.
- Teachers' secure knowledge of their subject ensures clear explanations and demonstrations pin-point what students must do to make further progress.
- Lessons are always conducted at good pace and efficient class management, organisation and control ensures students are fully engaged with learning activities.
- Lesson plans always include learning objectives but often there are too many and they are too broad to give a clear focus for the work. This makes it difficult to assess specific progress achieved.
- Students following examination courses have been set challenging targets and their progress is regularly assessed. They know what they should do to make further progress. Other students across both key stages are unsure about the level at which they are working or any targets for further improvement.

- Assessment of learning is weak. Short-term plans describe what assessment methods will be used rather than measuring the progress of individuals and groups against specific learning outcomes. Consequently, there is no information available to set tasks matched to the wide ability range of students.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Time allocation for PE in each key stage meets the government expectation of two hours curriculum time.
- In both key stages the curriculum is poorly balanced. Too much emphasis is placed on games, especially invasion games. This severely restricts the time allocated for students to engage with creative, compositional and aesthetic activities.
- The range of opportunities available at Key Stage 4 has increased and now includes a vocational course, the Level 1 Sports Leader course and accredited governing body coaching and officiating awards.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum does not offer equal access to activities for boys and girls. The boys are not timetabled to do dance and the girls have limited time for outdoor and adventure activities.
- The present organisation of classes results in a wide variation in the size of teaching groups. For example, the number of Key Stage 4 students following the trampoline option is three times greater than the size of the group opting to do netball. This restricts access to apparatus and reduces the time available for individual and group support. The problem is further compounded by doubling the size of some classes while the sports hall is out of use.
- The school entered the school sport partnership programme at a very late stage and to date it has made little impact on widening the range of activities or increasing participation levels.
- There is a good range of well-supported competitive and non-competitive extra-curricular activities. Students said they enjoyed fixtures with other schools and they would like more intra-school tournaments. They also said they especially enjoy the residential experiences provided.
- Currently the renovation work on the sports hall is affecting the range and balance of curriculum and extra-curricular opportunities offered.
- Several schemes of work are in need of updating to reflect the recent National Curriculum changes and to identify where information communication technology (ICT) can be more effectively used in practical work.
- The school has no data to show the contribution it makes towards the government target of five hours of physical activity in and beyond the curriculum.

## Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management in PE is satisfactory.

- The subject leader and PE staff work well as a team and are committed to improving on previous provision and standards. The new subject leader has had good support from the senior management team in tackling under performance.
- The subject leader has a clear vision and recognises the need to accelerate change but it is still too early to see the impact of recent actions.
- Teachers recognise the department has not kept pace in recent years with the speed of change in the subject. They feel they have missed out on several of the new initiatives introduced by the school sports partnership.
- The subject development plan identifies a broad agenda for further improvement but it is not the result of corporate departmental self-evaluation. The plan lacks measurable targets and clear success criteria.
- Monitoring and evaluation of lessons has not been sufficiently regular or incisive to identify and overcome weaknesses in teaching and learning.

## Subject issue - PE contribution to the outcomes of ECM

PE makes a very strong contribution to the outcomes of ECM.

- The emphasis placed on leading a healthy lifestyle and increasing levels of fitness is a particular strength of teaching in the department. In both key stages students work hard to increase their pulse rate and they demonstrate a range of exercises that will improve muscle strength and joint mobility.
- Students recognise the importance of participation in physical activity now and in later life. One girl said 'It is just as important as maths and English. Probably more important, as many young people are obese and putting their lives in danger'.
- Teachers have been very successful in ensuring everyone participates and that almost all students enjoy their lessons.
- The new leadership opportunities for students provide additional qualifications that will assist with wider career opportunities and possible future employment. Students act as sports captains and several on the leadership course have been able to develop their skills in a local primary school.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reviewing the curriculum and the way it is delivered to better meet the needs of all students and to ensure everyone makes the progress of which they are capable
- updating documentation including schemes of work and lesson plans to take full account of progress in all strands of the new National Curriculum
- extending use of assessment and tracking data beyond GCSE PE and sharing the information with students so they are clear about what they must do to improve their work
- more rigorous monitoring and evaluating of the quality of learning in lessons to underpin development planning and appropriately targeted Continuing Professional Development (CPD).

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop physical education in the school and that the sports hall will soon be back in regular use.

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