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Dear Mr Glover

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 15 and 16 of October 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 impact of the specialist school science and humanities status, 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.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good and standards are above average.

- Students make good progress in Key Stage 3. A very high percentage of students reach the standards expected nationally by Year 9. One third of students reach standards beyond and sometimes well beyond this level.
- In 2007 standards in the GCSE short course in PE were well above the national average but below the target predicted by the school itself.

The standards achieved by boys were slightly higher than those of girls.

- Progress in Key Stage 4 for students not involved in examination courses slows. This is because they experience just one lesson of 70 minutes per week, rather than the recommended two hours.
- The performance of the small cohort of students taking AS level and A2 examinations was more variable. AS level results were lower than expected level and weaker than in previous years. A2 results were similar to those achieved in other subjects.
- Some outstanding work was seen in gymnastics where the teacher took into account the achievements of some students outside the school. Variable tasks and apparatus arrangements allowed the students to use their own ideas and well refined techniques to compose high quality sequences and group balances. The results reflected an excellent understanding and appreciation of choreographic devices, group dynamics and spatial awareness.
- In a variety of invasion games students were able to evaluate their own and others' performances, and lead effective warm ups. They demonstrated good technique in skill performance when working individually and as part of a team. However, there were too few opportunities for them to select and apply their own tactical ideas in this activity.
- Teams and individuals achieve considerable success at local, county and national level in a variety of different sports. The school offers very effective support for talented students who receive high level coaching in outside clubs.
- PE makes a strong contribution to students' personal development and participation rates are high. Most students say they enjoy physical education and sport and that they would like a wider choice of activities at Key Stage 4.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Lessons are well planned and learning tasks carefully structured to meet clearly identified outcomes. Plans place equal emphasis on developing students' knowledge, understanding and skills. The good balance between the time for probing questions that deepen understanding and the time for skill repetition leads to the high standards and progress achieved.
- The conventions of management, control and efficient organisation are all firmly in place. Expectations are high and lessons are conducted at a good pace because students are familiar with set routines.
- Teachers have very good subject knowledge and use it effectively to provide clear demonstrations that illustrate strengths and weaknesses in performance. They share with students the National Curriculum levels at which they are working and tell them what they should do in order to make further progress.

- There is good support for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Poor indoor accommodation severely restricts the alternative programme offered on wet days. Continuity in learning is interrupted because groups following different units of work have to be taught together. The increase in size of the groups within a confined space limits the skills that can be taught safely.
- There is little use of information and communication technology (ICT) as an aid to learning in practical work.
- Learning objectives relate to acquiring and developing skills. They do not give sufficient attention to the other strands of the National Curriculum.
- Tracking data is completed each term but it is not used to provide different tasks and challenges for the mixed ability groups that make up each class.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The school has recently successfully extended the curriculum to provide a much broader choice of accredited courses in Key Stage 4. It now includes a full GCSE course, a vocational BTEC course and Sports Leadership Level 1.
- A wide range of extra-curricular opportunities is available. There is good provision for competitive fixtures with other schools and within the intra-school house system.
- The work of the School Sport Co-ordinator has been very effective in providing a range of activities that appeal to students, especially girls, who would not normally choose to be involved. For example, the off-site links with the ROKO Health Club and Fitness Centre and the dance and cheerleading sessions have proved very popular and participation levels are high.
- At present there is no data to show the contribution made by the school to the percentage of students meeting the government target of five hours physical activity each week.
- In Key Stage 3, all students experience at least two hours of curriculum PE each week. The programme is broad but not well balanced because there is a predominance of games activities.
- Sixth form students have suitable opportunities to take part in enrichment activities and inter-school competitions.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management in PE is good.

- The head of department provides effective leadership to a highly committed and well-organised team. The opportunity for individual members of the team to use their particular subject expertise is one reason why students' achievement is high.

- Senior leaders are aware of the restrictions that very poor accommodation has on provision and continuity in learning. Staff and students do their best to cope with these constraints. Plans are in place to make changes to the curriculum when the school moves onto a single site in a new building in September 2009.
- The head of department has an accurate view of the strengths and areas for further improvement in the subject. Development plans identify clear priorities and actions including links to further staff training where this is a requirement.
- Systems used to track and analyse students' performance are particularly good for examination groups. No analysis has been completed for students following the core programme in Key Stage 4.
- Programmes available through the PE School Sport and Young People (PESSYP) strategy are carefully evaluated and adopted where they can enrich provision. Plans are in place to review schemes of work for each key stage following the introduction of the new National Curriculum.
- The department has good capacity to improve further.

Subject issue - PE contribution to the outcomes of ECM particularly being healthy

- Overall PE makes a good impact on ECM outcomes. New opportunities introduced in Key Stage 4 enable students to select pathways for participation that are suited to their individual needs.
- Teachers have been very successful in ensuring participation rates are high and that almost all students enjoy their PE lessons. The increased range of provision has increased their enjoyment.
- Students know how to lead warm ups that involve aerobic, anaerobic and stretching activities. They understand that physical activity and a healthy diet is important in their lives. Some said physical education was the most important area of the school curriculum.
- There are too few opportunities within the PE curriculum to deliver health related activity in a progressive way. Opportunities for working with other subject departments, including the specialist subject science, have not been fully exploited.
- The recent appointment of a healthy school co-ordinator has already provided an audit and action plan that will lead to more coherent and consistent provision. There is a high level of commitment from the PE department and senior leaders to supporting the Nottinghamshire Healthy Schools Programme.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- using tracking and assessment information to provide tasks that match the learning needs of the wide ability range in each class
- creating a better balance in the curriculum by reducing the time allocated to games
- co-ordinating and enriching the health related activity programme through closer links with other subject departments, especially the school specialist subject science

- making more effective use of ICT.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop physical education.

I wish the school every success as it moves to the new building on a single site. The accommodation will provide the facilities for the physical education department to build on the good standards that already exist and bring their plans for further improvement to fruition.

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