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Mr N Finnigan
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Dear Mr Finnigan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 20 and 21 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 mathematics and computing 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 satisfactory.

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- Data held by the college indicates standards at the end of Key Stage 3 are below the national expectation. This judgement is in accordance with inspection findings. A small number of students achieve standards above the national expectation. Standards have been similar in each of the last three years.

- In 2007 GCSE results were below the national average and well below the college average for all subjects. The small cohort of girls achieved standards higher than those of boys and slightly above the national average. The number of students achieving the higher A* and A grades was very low.
- In 2008 the introduction of the Sports Enterprise Award resulted in students achieving much higher results, as the course was well suited to their particular needs.
- Results at AS level and A-level are broadly average. In most areas of the course students perform in line with expectations. The department is tackling the module that has been weaker, Contemporary Studies. With additional support after college and excellent attendance, students are making improvements.
- At the time of entry to the college standards are variable. Overall they are lower than the national expectation. The majority of students make satisfactory progress, although many are capable of making more progress than at present.
- In swimming students achieve very high standards. By the end of Year 7 almost everyone meets the National Curriculum requirement to swim 25 metres unaided and they know a range of personal survival skills.
- In the work seen, achievement was better in invasion games than gymnastics because there is more time given to this activity in the curriculum. For example, skill acquisition and use of knowledge and understanding to make decisions in a conditioned game of rugby was good. In gymnastics, the performance of basic balance skills on apparatus and the floor was poor. The composition of simple sequences to link skills lacked control, flow and precision.
- Students mostly enjoy physical education and sport. They particularly appreciate the effort teachers make on their behalf. As one girl said, "The teachers respect us as if we are adults; they praise us but also challenge us."
- A number of new activities have been introduced through the PE School Sport and Young People strategy (PESSYP) that interest and challenge students. They have increased motivation and participation, especially among older girls.

Quality of Teaching and Learning

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- All teaching was at least satisfactory. In slightly over half of lessons it was good.
- The best lessons started promptly and were delivered at good pace. They had a clear focus for learning and the students themselves were invited to contribute and try out their own ideas. The subject knowledge of the teacher was secure and demonstrations were used effectively to show strengths and where performances could be further improved.
- The conventions of management, control and good organisation were firmly in place in all lessons.

- Learning objectives are often too broad and describe the tasks to be covered rather than the learning to be achieved. They usually identify activities that relate to skill development rather than drawing on all strands of the National Curriculum.
- Medium term plans for practical work are designed as a series of lessons delivered in sequence. Little use is made of the detailed tracking system or assessment of learning to plan and provide tasks in practical work that are suited to the wide ability range in each class. One exception is provision for students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. They are given good support from classroom assistants.
- Information communication technology (ICT) is used effectively in theory lessons and AS level /A level practical work. Very few younger students have had 'hands-on' experience in the use of digital video recorders for evaluating their own and others' performance.
- Procedures for assessing work across Key Stage 3 and 4 are good and provide accurate judgements. National Curriculum levels are displayed in work and changing areas and teachers share with students what they must do to make further improvement. Challenging targets have been set for the smaller cohort of students following the GCSE course in Years 10 and 11.
- Teachers could use questions more effectively to deepen students' knowledge and understanding and to ensure the responses they make help to promote speaking and listening skills. Sometimes teachers talk for too long and over use praise.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory overall but includes some very good features.

- Provision for students following accredited courses is excellent. In Year 9 there is an option to commence work on the GCSE course early. The college has sensibly introduced the Sport Enterprise Award as a vocational alternative for students not well-suited to the full GCSE course.
- A large percentage of students benefit from regular participation in a wide range of extra curricular activities. The PESSYP strategy has increased the already broad range of opportunities available. For example, the 'Partnership Games' is an innovative opportunity allowing students who have not previously represented the college, to take part in an area-wide competition. There are also good opportunities to participate in a variety of off-site activities in health related exercise and in outdoor and adventure activities.
- In Key Stage 3 the curriculum is broad but not well balanced. Over-emphasis on games severely limits the time available for gymnastics and dance. In these activities there are too few lessons in each unit and across the key stage to cover the learning identified in schemes of work. In Key Stage 4, students following the core programme have just one hour of curriculum time each week. These shortcomings have a negative impact on standards and achievement.

- Sixth form students have suitable opportunities to take part one afternoon each week in an enrichment programme. They regularly represent the college in inter-school fixtures.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management in PE is good.

- The subject leader is an excellent role model. She is committed to raising standards and passionate about improving the profile of physical education. She has a clear vision for the subject and has worked very hard alongside dedicated colleagues to ensure the department runs smoothly and is managed efficiently.
- The documentation that has been provided to guide day-to-day practice is detailed and informative and self-evaluation is mostly accurate.
- Good support has been offered by the senior management team in helping to analyse examination data and in providing the new fitness suite and dedicated classroom.
- Although there is a self-critical culture within the department, lessons have not been monitored sufficiently regularly or rigorously to identify some weaknesses in planning and teaching that contribute to under-achievement.
- The department keeps abreast of new opportunities and has embraced many of the programmes available through funding from the PEESYP strategy.
- Minutes of meetings reflect full consultation and corporate decisions made within the department. However, the subject development plan lacks the specific detail of the strategies and professional development required to raise standards.
- There is good capacity within the department for further improvement.

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

PE makes a very strong contribution to the outcomes of ECM

- The importance of the Every Child Matters agenda permeates the subject.
- Teachers have been very successful in ensuring everyone participates and that almost all students enjoy their PE lessons.
- Students recognise the importance of participation in physical activity now and in later life. The "Why Exercise" programme in Key Stage 4 helps them to understand the need for a healthy lifestyle and the dangers associated with poor diet, drugs and lack of exercise. It also teaches basic principles of first aid.
- Health related exercise is delivered as discrete units across Key Stages 3 and 4 ensuring good progress overall.
- The department is very good at promoting positive relationships, in developing confidence and in recognising successes. A large number

take advantage of the opportunities offered in the extra-curricular programme.

- The opportunity for students to take a leadership course has increased their enjoyment and motivation for the subject. It has successfully engaged and built high self-esteem in several students who did not particularly enjoy PE. One student spoke with real passion about the benefits she had received from her involvement with the 'Young Ambassador' programme.
- Accreditation through leadership and through the Sport Enterprise course will assist with wider career opportunities and possible future employment.

Areas for improvement which we discussed included:

- increasing 'core' curriculum time at Key Stage 4
- improving balance and continuity in the Key Stage 3 programme of study
- more regular and rigorous evaluation of teaching and learning in lessons to address under achievement and to inform development plans
- making better use of assessment to provide tasks that match the wide ability groups in classes.

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

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