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20 October 2008

Mr T Quinn
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Dear Mr Quinn

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 06 and 07 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 interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation and impact of technology specialist status, analysis of students' work and observation of eight lessons and extra-curricular activities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding.

- Results in GCSE examinations have been above average over the past three years. These results represent outstanding progress from below average starting points in Year 7.
- The number of students taking accreditation in sport and physical education is increasing rapidly as the school replaces GCSE and A-level with Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) sports courses.

- In 2008, nearly all students taking the BTEC course at age 16 achieved a distinction, exceeding the challenging targets set for them. Girls and boys achieved equally well. Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make exceptional progress because their needs are recognised and they are well supported. They achieve successfully in accredited courses and lessons.
- The small number of students taking A-Level courses achieve well overall. Achievement is better at A2 than at AS level. The number of students who move from AS to A2 level is very small.
- Students' personal development is outstanding. They develop very effective leadership skills. Dance and sports leaders are especially successful in organising sports activities and dance performances for high numbers of primary students.
- Students' performance is particularly strong in games such as football, rugby and netball.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Teachers have excellent knowledge of how to teach specific activities so that students develop a full range of skills and abilities to a high standard. Staff set very high expectations of students' learning and conduct.
- Staff relationships with students are excellent, being both supportive and challenging.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used very effectively to support learning in theory lessons and, increasingly, in practical lessons.
- Lesson planning builds on prior learning very well indeed so that tasks are well matched to learners' different abilities and take account of secure assessment information. Lessons are well structured and students are clear of what they will learn and what more is expected if they are to reach the highest levels.
- Students receive excellent guidance and feedback from teachers so they know exactly what they should do to improve. Students are constantly involved in evaluating their own and others' performance. They are fully aware of the criteria for good performance.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- A very high proportion of students have access to two hours high quality PE and school sport and the number with access to five hours is increasing rapidly.
- The principles of the new National Curriculum are being fully embraced, so that a wide range of activities is offered to meet students' interests and needs within the current temporary restrictions on the facilities.

- The strong focus on leadership and health and fitness pervades all activities and students are very well prepared for the opportunities to become accredited leaders in sport and dance in Key Stage 4.
- Students' creative abilities are developed through the focus on problem solving and decision making inherent in developing leadership skills.
- The excellent range of extra-curricular activities is very well supported by students across all year groups. Teams and individuals enjoy considerable success in football, rugby, tag rugby netball, athletics and cricket for girls and boys.
- Gifted and talented students are supported through the excellent opportunities for success with this the school's excellent extra-curricular and inter-school sport programme. They are guided towards many external clubs and activities.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The head of department sets an excellent example, leading a strong and supportive team of staff that is clearly focused on improving provision and raising standards further.
- The department has a secure view of its strengths and areas to improve based on rigorous monitoring of provision and close analysis of results and progress. The department is aware that it is not yet fully consulting pupils for their views on the provision.
- Department improvement planning and professional development is well focused on priorities identified.
- The school's specialist subject of technology has contributed well to increasing the resources for and the use of ICT in PE lessons. The virtual learning environment is used effectively to support students' home study especially.

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

- Levels of participation and effort in lessons and extra-curricular activities are very high. Students thoroughly enjoy lessons and they support clubs and teams conscientiously.
- Students' behaviour is excellent. They show high levels of respect for staff and one another.
- Students have an exceptionally good knowledge and understanding of how to keep themselves healthy and safe because these are a strong focus in all lessons.
- Students make a significant contribution to the school and local community through their leadership of many sporting and dance activities with younger pupils.
- Students work extremely well in pairs and groups and are developing into confident independent learners and thinkers. These skills and qualities alongside their well developed leadership skills prepare them exceptionally well for their future lives.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- gathering the views of students more often to assist in evaluating the effectiveness of provision.

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

Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector