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Mr B Guthrie  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Guthrie

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 and 14 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 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 sports college status, interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of five lessons, short focused visits to other lessons and visits to extra-curricular activities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good.

- Around half of Year 10 and 11 students take GCSE PE or Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) First in Sport courses at certificate and diploma level. Girls and boys achieve equally well and the number of girls following accredited courses has increased significantly over the past year.

- The most recent GCSE results in 2007 were above average and students exceeded their targets. No students took GCSE PE in 2008. It has been re-introduced for students currently in Year 10.
- Students achieve well in BTEC courses. In 2008 students exceeded their challenging targets and the Sports College target.
- Students show good levels of competence in their leadership skills. Around half of students in Key Stage 4 were involved in active leadership last year and many gained accreditations such as the Junior Football Organiser and the Sports Leader Award Level 1.
- Examples of competence and a good level of skill were observed in Key Stage 4 trampoline lessons.
- The girls' rugby team has been successful in local competition, getting through to national level competition.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are well supported and they make good progress. Effective additional support, designed to develop self-confidence and motor skills, is provided for a small group of students.

### Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Staff set high expectations of learning and conduct to which students respond positively. Relationships are good and classes are well managed and organised so that lessons run smoothly.
- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge enabling them to plan suitable steps in learning, explain difficult concepts clearly and use questioning well to develop students' understanding.
- Teachers use a good variety of learning activities that interest and challenge students.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own progress and learning. They frequently evaluate their own and each other's performance and they often work independently and in groups.
- Assessment is carried out at the end of each unit and used to set challenging targets for students. Students receive useful guidance and feedback in lessons and through teachers' written comments.
- Lessons are well structured. They have a clear purpose and students know what they are setting out to achieve. Occasionally, it is not clear what more is expected to reach higher levels of performance, especially in accredited courses.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning in practical and theory lessons.
- The higher level teaching assistant attached to the department is deployed well offering effective support in lessons, especially where there are high numbers of students, and leading extra-curricular activities.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- A well balanced curriculum is constantly being developed in response to students' needs and interests.
- Most students take part in two hours of high quality PE and sport each week except the small minority whose attendance is low. Around 45% of students are involved in five hours of high quality PE or sport each week, meeting the sports college target.
- The new National Curriculum is well established for Year 7 students and schemes of work support teachers' planning effectively in Key Stage 3.
- The curriculum for Key Stage 4 students offers an increasing range of courses, for example, the dance leader course has been introduced this year. Schemes of work are in the process of being developed for core PE lessons. The Sports Education programme, where students take on increasing levels of responsibility for the organisation, officiating and coaching of sports, forms the basis of much of the learning.
- Leadership opportunities are offered to all students, in addition to the sports and dance leader courses, students take officiating qualifications in a number of sports such as netball and rugby.
- Around half of students are regularly involved in a wide range of extra-curricular activities and around one third take part in inter-school competitions.
- Sports college status has enabled more opportunities for the local community to take up sport and exercise and increasing numbers of students take part in community based sports.

## Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- Strong experienced leadership and an effective team of staff have brought about rapid improvement in the 15 to 18 months since their appointments.
- A very clear focus on the right priorities has successfully brought about significant improvements in students' attitudes and behaviour, achievement, the curriculum, opportunities for accreditation and leadership, extra-curricular provision and resources.
- Self-evaluation is secure and based on robust monitoring of students' achievement and provision, and on consultation with students.
- Well-focused professional development is leading to a broadening of the curriculum and improved learning and teaching.
- Risk assessments have been carried out for working areas and out-of-school visits but do not yet include all activities and sports.

## Impact of specialist status

- PE as a specialist subject is making a significant contribution to improvements within the subject, especially to staffing, resources and facilities.
- There is a good level of support for more able and talented students. Some students who compete at national level in their chosen sport have been especially well supported through, for example, ensuring they are able to catch up on work missed when attending events.
- Specialist status is in the very early stages of influencing and enhancing provision across the school. The priority over the past 15 to 18 months has been to make improvements and ensure a good level of provision within the subject of PE.

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

- Most students enjoy PE lessons and they are responding well to teaching that challenges them and is fun.
- Attendance and participation is satisfactory overall and improving for each year group. Attendance is better in Key Stage 3 than in Key Stage 4.
- Behaviour in lessons is good.
- The department works hard to include students who are at risk of disengagement from PE and has established a number of alternative activities that successfully include students. These include a group that visits a local gym out of school hours and a group of Year 10 girls who are following a BTEC Certificate First in Sport course as an alternative to core PE.
- Many students are developing a secure knowledge and understanding of how to stay healthy. Students learn how to warm up safely and appropriately and those following accredited courses in Key Stage 4 develop good awareness of how to stay healthy and become fit for sport.
- In some core PE lessons there is not enough emphasis on how exercise and activity can contribute to health and fitness and consequently some students are unclear of what they should do to stay healthy.
- Students develop a good awareness of how to stay safe in PE because teachers pay good attention to encouraging safe practice in lessons. Leadership courses have a strong focus on maintaining safety in activities.
- Students make a good contribution to their own and the wider community. Sports leaders organise activities for primary age students, and support clubs and activities within school. A group visited Poland through the 'Dreams and Teams' scheme and led sporting festivals for young children.
- Students are well prepared for their future economic well-being. They work well in pairs and groups offering much support to one another. They learn to communicate well with each other taking on various roles such as officiating, leading and organising sporting and dance activities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improving attendance and participation in PE, especially in Key Stage 4
- ensuring that all students develop an understanding of how exercise and activity contribute to a healthy lifestyle
- making clearer to students what more is required of them to reach higher levels, especially in accredited courses.

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