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Mrs WA White
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs White

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 01 and 02 October 2008 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 schools but the individual schools 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 the impact of the specialist sports status, interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of documentation and six lesson observations.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding and students reach exceptionally high standards.

- From an average starting point students achieve very high standards by the end of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4; many more than usual reach Level 6 and gain an A* or A grade at GCSE. This is particularly impressive as virtually the whole cohort is entered. Those not entered for GCSE follow the BTEC Sport course, where 94% pass and 26% gain merits or distinctions. Lesson observations confirm high standards and rapid progress for all students, including those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities.
- Students at the school have won national, county and district titles in various sports and many gain representative honours. Standards of

physical fitness are high and development of the four strands of PE is good.

- Students' personal development is outstanding. Behaviour and attitudes to learning are first rate and students show care and consideration for their peers. They enjoy working independently and assuming responsibility. Participation rates are very high.
- Students' successes in PE are celebrated regularly through assemblies, an honours board, the awarding of colours and an annual presentation evening. Consequently students' self-esteem and confidence are high.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

Teaching is outstanding and promotes very effective learning.

- Excellent support and guidance from staff, underpinned by their expert subject knowledge, give students the platform to excel. At times teaching is inspirational and captures students' imagination. Planning is impeccable and staff demonstrate techniques and strategies effectively, which helps to consolidate students' knowledge. Clear objectives, student centred activities and praise were consistent features of the lessons observed.
- Students responded best to learning approaches that were challenging, practical and allowed them to discover solutions to complex problems for themselves. The use of analogies to interpret difficult concepts and memory aids in theory lessons worked particularly well. In one lesson, a slow start meant students were passive for too long.
- An innovative high quality assessment system has been introduced. This has been adapted into child friendly descriptors to aid students' understanding. It includes initial assessment using core assessment tasks, which allow staff to set students by ability and tailor planning to specific learning needs. Frequent testing, evaluation and feedback of progress give staff and students a clear idea of achievement levels. Parents benefit from regular updates on their child's progress. Peer and self-assessment is undertaken well. However, a minority of the marking in students' books and files lack evaluative feedback.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is excellent overall.

- Students experience five of the six National Curriculum activity areas at Key Stage 3, while the sixth is an option at Key Stage 4. Time is evenly distributed between the activities. Complementary studies, including a themed week on the Olympics and an extensive extra-curricular programme enrich provision further. Primary links are strong and good transition is actively promoted by the School Sport Coordinator.
- The broad curriculum allows students to pursue vocational, aesthetic or academic routes, through GCSE PE, Dance and BTEC Sport courses. Talented Year 9 students are entered early for GCSE PE. Students can also choose from 18 accredited officiating and coaching courses, plus an in-house leadership course. Students' opinions are sought and help to shape the evolving syllabus.

- All students have two and a half hours of PE. A sports technician and community coach enhance the department's ability to foster high standards through liaison work in partner primary schools, supporting students with additional needs and organising events so that teachers are free to teach.
- Leadership opportunities are numerous. Students act as lunchtime activity leaders, sports leaders in partner primary schools and nominated students serve as 'sports commanders' in lessons, leading warm ups, demonstrating skills and organising drills. There are strong school-club links which provide a route of continuous development for talented performers and those wishing to learn more. Highly committed staff and excellent facilities support provision exceptionally well.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The impact of specialist sports status on the quality and effectiveness of PE provision has been substantial. In fact its work and the work of the PE department are indistinguishable, such is the degree of teamwork.
- Students' superb commitment, enjoyment and personal development, together with their outstanding achievement and standards are testament to the quality of leadership and management. PE has a high profile and enjoys the full support of senior managers. PE is seen as a lead department, and the advanced skills PE teacher and his colleagues effectively lead whole staff training.
- The Director of Sport works tirelessly on behalf of PE and sport within the school and local community and has won a regional service award. With her very able deputy, she ensures things run smoothly on a day to day basis. Responsibilities are shared and there is good teamwork.
- The PE handbook provides good guidance for staff. Schemes allow staff freedom to personalise the learning experience and resources are deployed well. Rigorous appraisal and quality assurance ensure there is an accurate view of strengths and weaknesses. Regular training keeps staff up to date with current thinking in the subject. There is good capacity to improve based on a track record of excellence.

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

- PE makes a good contribution to ECM outcomes and students epitomise healthy bodies and healthy minds. They enjoy PE immensely, participate regularly and achieve very highly. They make a positive contribution to their local community by acting as sports leaders and also gain valuable sport related work experience.
- Students know how to act responsibly and stay safe during PE activities and develop a number of key skills such as team working, leadership and the ability to analyse and improve their own and others' performance.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring the quality of marking is consistently good
- avoiding unnecessary inactivity in lessons.

I hope these observations are useful as you work to develop PE 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

John Young
Her Majesty's Inspector