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19 March 2009

Mrs K Ryan  
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Dear Mrs Ryan

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education (PE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 04 and 05 March 2009 to look at work in 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 science and mathematics status interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, observation of eight lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of physical education was judged to be good with many outstanding features.

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good overall.

- Standards are above national averages for all age groups in both core and examination groups. In GCSE and A level PE results have been on an improving trend for the last four years and a much higher than average proportion attain A\* - C grades.
- Achievement across all activities and strands of the PE National Curriculum is good, particularly in students' skills when observing, evaluating and feeding back to each other for improvement. Students

have good understanding of health and fitness as this is given a high profile in and around the PE working area.

- Staff identify students who are higher attaining or gifted and talented in PE and have started to extend their roles and challenge in lessons, although this is not fully embedded across the department.
- Students have good opportunities for personal development through PE; they undertake house sports captain roles responsibly. A small number of students have opportunities to take a sport leadership award and they talk with enthusiasm about working with younger pupils in their own school and at local primary schools. These students recognise that it helps them become self-confident, more organised and more mature when talking with different groups of people. Good plans are already in place to expand these opportunities to include more students.
- The vast majority of students say they enjoy PE and that staff ensure everyone is involved in lessons and clubs. Behaviour in lessons is outstanding from the vast majority. A minority say they would like work to be even more challenging in lessons.

### Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with different aspects that are outstanding in most lessons.

- All PE staff have outstanding subject knowledge. They all use this exceptionally well in direct teaching situations and to assess student's progress in lessons to give individual feedback that leads to improved learning. A strength of the work in PE is teachers' use of open-ended questions to extend students understanding and independent thinking about the subject.
- Good relationships are evident in all lessons; staff know students well and use this to engage them in work, especially in examination theory lessons.
- Schemes of work are comprehensive and support teaching and learning very well. An outstanding range of teaching methods were observed across the departments work although they are not being consistently used by all members of staff. Occasionally work does not match the full range of ability levels in a class or there is too much teacher input.
- National Curriculum levels of attainment are displayed in the PE working area and are used in reports to parents but they are not consistently used in lessons, as a result not all students are aware of how well they are achieving in comparison to national expectations or how to improve further.
- Students are very positive about how teachers encourage them. They comment that marking in exam classes always helps them get better and sixth form students were particularly vocal about the usefulness of the PE intranet site. Students acknowledge that PE staff are very positive role models. As one said 'they get you active and push us to take part in sport outside school'.

## Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good with outstanding aspects.

- All students in Key Stages 3 and 4 have two hours PE per week in the curriculum and the vast majority of sixth form students have one hour of programmed PE.
- The Key Stage 3 curriculum offers a good breadth of study although units of work are short at six to eight hours to enable an in depth study of an activity. Staff introduce new activities each year to offer a broader range of experiences such as golf and boxercise.
- The Key Stage 4 curriculum has been altered significantly over the last three years, following feedback from students, to include activities that better suit their interests and needs. Students talk with enthusiasm about the choice of activities including being able to work with friends and/or others of similar ability. Core lessons include an excellent range of team games, aesthetic activities and non-traditional sports such as American football and ultimate Frisbee.
- The range of examination courses has also been increased to include BTEC sport following an evaluation of provision, standards and achievement.
- Links with the specialist status subjects of science and mathematics are starting to be made including sharing the principles of sports leadership awards for young science leaders. PE staff acknowledge that this work is still at an early stage of development.
- The department offer a large number of extra-curricular and enrichment activities over the course of a year. Students were particularly enthusiastic about the inter-house competitions, playing against other schools and now achieving more success plus the opportunity to attend clubs in order to improve their skills. The subject leader is aware that numbers participating in extra-curricular activities are relatively low and has started to tackle this. The school sports coordinator has introduced a number of additional activities to encourage wider participation, for example concept rowing and sessions with an external coach for girls' basketball.

## Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The curriculum and assistant curriculum leaders work exceptionally well together and have brought about significant positive changes to PE provision over the last three years. They know the strengths and weaknesses of the department very well and have set a clear and ambitious plan for future improvements within a realistic and achievable timeframe. They have good understanding of the need to iron out some minor inconsistencies across the department.
- The curriculum leader has benefited from a comprehensive programme of professional development that enables him to lead and manage the departments work highly effectively; the department runs smoothly on a day-to-day basis. Other staff in the department also have good

opportunities for professional development to increase subject knowledge and share teaching skills.

- The curriculum leader is an outstanding role model in his teaching. Others would benefit from observing his practices especially in the way he gives continuous feedback to students for improvement and deepening of their understanding of an activity.
- The department has secure procedures for assessing and tracking student's progress over time in Key Stage 3 and examination classes. They have robust intervention procedures for students deemed underachieving. There are no procedures in place for core Key Stage 4 students to help them understand their progress through PE including leadership and teamwork as well as in their performance skills.
- PE staff make very good use of students' feedback on provision to bring about changes. For example they have responded positively to suggestions for activities in the core Key Stage 4 curriculum.
- The school has extensive outdoor facilities although fields are adversely affected by wet weather because of poor drainage. Senior leaders and governors are very supportive of the departments work reflected in their commitment to an extensive refurbishment programme. The school has recently been awarded their first Sportsmark in recognition of provision across the school.

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

- The work of the PE department makes a good contribution to the outcomes of ECM overall. A strength is their work in 'being healthy' with students having excellent understanding of leading healthy lifestyles. Parents are encouraged to be fully involved in helping them achieve this through information in a yearbook. This clearly sets out the importance of tackling childhood obesity through a combination of diet and exercise, including regular participation in PE lessons and extra-curricular activities.
- Good attention is paid to the safety of students in moving both to and working in different areas of the school grounds. Students work cooperatively and safety together in confined areas such as changing rooms and when there are large numbers in the gymnasium.
- Students make a positive contribution to their own and the local community through their leadership and volunteering. For example girls who run a gymnastics club for primary pupils and have chosen to take additional coaching awards.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- reviewing the length of time for units of work in Key Stage 3 to enable greater in depth study of an activity
- considering methods of assessment and self-evaluation for core Key Stage 4 students so they better understand their progress through physical education
- finding ways to share good and outstanding practice more to bring about even greater consistency across the department's work.

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

Judith Rundle  
Her Majesty's Inspector