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Mr Leonard
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Leonard

Ofsted survey inspection programme – physical education (PE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 18 and 19 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 language status, interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of eight lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good.

- Standards are above average overall by the end of Key Stage 3. School data indicates a particularly high proportion of students attain Level 6, which is well above expectations. Standards in core Key Stage 4 are above average but the rate of progress is slightly slower than in Key Stage 3.
- Standards in GCSE PE are in line with national averages but a lower than average number attain the highest A* to A grades. The school has already identified this and have good interventions in place to tackle

and improve this position. The attainment of girls in PE has significantly improved in recent years.

- Achievement is good overall because of the quality of teaching. Lower attaining students make good progress from their starting points overall. Gifted and talented students have excellent support to extend their skills through external workshops, additional coaching and through the Junior Athlete Education programme with mentor support and 'catch up' sessions for school work. However the work and challenge in lessons for students with different ability levels, especially the high attainers, is not yet consistent across the department.
- Pupils make excellent progress in their use of the 'evaluate and improve' strand of the PE National Curriculum. They also have good opportunities to select and apply their learned skills in different activities.
- Students have good opportunities for personal development through PE including taking a variety of roles in lessons and working with other students in leadership or coaching positions. For example Year 7 students supporting on the primary transition day and Year 8 students helping to run sports day for the on-site special school. Small groups of Year 10 and 11 students take governing body coaching awards in football and netball.
- The school has a good system of students working through different levels of rewards that start with red and work up to gold. Students are proud to wear representative colours and sports badges. The recent introduction of earning a PE 'hoodie' has motivated students to give even greater commitment to the subject.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- All staff have at least good subject knowledge that has been strengthened further through professional development. Where subject knowledge and teaching strategies are outstanding it results in students who are focused, engaged in challenging work and who are able to evaluate work accurately and make positive suggestions for improvement.
- Lesson planning is thorough, making good use of the whole school format; it makes good reference to students' prior learning and lesson objectives to meet the range of abilities. Occasionally these aspects are not successfully transferred into lessons.
- Within the department staff use a good range of teaching strategies that enables students to learn in different ways. A consistent strength in teaching is the use of questioning techniques to stretch students' knowledge and understanding of the subject. However the use of a variety of approaches in individual lessons is not consistently applied by all staff in the department. Occasionally the pace of learning slows with students being inactive for too long when there is too much teacher input.
- All staff have very high expectations of students physical and verbal input to lessons and relationships are strong between staff and

students. Many students comment on how approachable staff are, the quality of the feedback they receive and how staff make lessons fun.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well in GCSE theory lessons and is starting to be used in practical sessions, across all age groups, to help students evaluate and improve performances. There is a missed opportunity for students to use the video cameras for themselves.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good overall.

- The curriculum for Key Stage 3 offers good breadth and balance and has recently been extended with the introduction of dance, rhythmic gymnastics and volleyball for girls. It is too early to see the impact of this on standards and achievement. At times the curriculum does not suit the needs of low ability groups, especially when teaching traditional team games.
- The Key Stage 4 core curriculum has been successfully reviewed to offer greater breadth and choice of activities that is re-engaging students well, especially older girls. They are particularly enthusiastic about aerobics, using the local leisure centre for fitness and the 'happy healthy' session. Other students welcomed the opportunity to play golf as part of the core programme. The department are currently exploring different accreditation courses to add more focus to core Key Stage 4 lessons.
- Outdoor and adventurous activities play a prominent role in the PE curriculum through week long residential experiences for every age group although this is not currently exploited through extended units of work in preparation for or as follow up activities.
- All students, including those in core Key Stage 4 lessons, have excellent opportunities for two hours of curriculum PE, with an additional five hours for GCSE. Students enjoy PE so much many said they wanted even more!
- Good links are made with other subjects during the Year 7 residential camp where students study art, science and geography along side outdoor and adventurous activities. There is a missed opportunity to undertake joint preparation to extend this good experience even further.
- The extra-curricular and enrichment programmes are good and the school make good use of external coaches to extend opportunities further, for example a new trampolining club and girls only football and rugby, following student feedback.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- The head of department has good understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and priorities for development. These are effectively translated into a department improvement plan within realistic and

attainable timescales. All members of the department work extremely well together and are constantly seeking ways to improve the range of opportunities and quality of provision alongside raising standards. Positive changes are already apparent since the permanent appointment of head of department at the start of the academic year.

- Good programmes are in place for monitoring and evaluation activities and professional development for all members of the department. As a result staff have increased both their subject knowledge and range of teaching strategies. Although good procedures are in place to share practices inconsistencies are still apparent across the department.
- Staff make good use of the local authority assessment procedures including child friendly descriptors of PE National Curriculum levels of attainment. Consequently all students in Key Stage 3 know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. Staff need to inject and ensure rigor of assessment at the Level 5/Level 6 borderline. Procedures to assess, track and intervene with GCSE students identified as underachieving are excellent.
- Links with the language specialist status are still at an early stage of development although students spoke with enthusiasm about the Africa week.
- The school has good range of indoor and outdoor facilities for PE. Staff pay good attention to safety when working in the gym/school hall where large gymnastic equipment has to be stored around the edges. The girls changing rooms have recently been painted and displays include a good range of key words and tactical advice for different sports. The sports hall has displays of levels of attainment but there is a missed opportunity to use other forms of PE and sports stimuli to motivate and engage students further.

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

- The vast majority of students say how much they enjoy PE, especially older girls now that they have more choice of activities in core lessons. Behaviour is always good; students have very positive attitudes to lessons reflected in high participation rates.
- Students have good understanding of leading healthy lifestyles and appreciate the changes made to the types of food available throughout the day. They also acknowledge the contribution the 10 mile sponsored walk and hike to the Year 7 residential camp make to 'being healthy'. Students also comment that PE staff actively encourage them to be active at weekends through the school run cross country events and by advertising local clubs. The Year 7 curriculum has been adapted this year to deliver a joint unit of work with technology on healthy lifestyles.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- consider how to adapt the curriculum further to meet the needs of low attaining groups and to extend opportunities for outdoor and adventurous activities further
- explore ways to bring about even greater consistency in the range of teaching methods and challenge for higher attaining students in lessons
- ensure rigor of assessment at the Level 5/Level 6 borderline.

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