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Ms N D'Rozario
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Dear Ms D'Rozario

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education (PE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 25 and 26 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 performing arts status, interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of 12 lessons or part lessons, and extra curricular activities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is good.

- Around a half of students take an accreditation in PE or dance in Key Stage 4. GCSE results have improved over the past three years and in 2008 were in line with the national average. The proportion of students gaining A* or A grades in 2008 was an improvement on the previous year. Students achieved better results in PE than in most of their other subjects and most students exceeded challenging targets.

- Students taking GCSE dance as an extra-curricular subject achieve well. Results are in line with national averages, although in 2008 few gained A* or A grades. Students currently in Year 10 are making good progress towards their challenging targets. The poor attendance of a few students holds back their progress.
- Recent results for A-Level and OCR National Certificate are broadly average, with students achieving satisfactorily in relation to their targets. Current students are making at least satisfactory progress and many are on target to exceed their predicted grades.
- Students make good progress in core PE lessons in Key Stage 3 and 4 and reach good standards. Most students have a secure understanding of how to maintain health and fitness. Year 9 girls skilfully adapted activities to suit the type of fitness they were trying to achieve. A good proportion of Key Stage 4 and sixth form students gain leadership qualifications.
- Students' personal development in PE is good. Behaviour in lessons is good and students have positive attitudes.
- Levels of participation are good overall although rates of attendance in Year 11 are lower than in other year groups.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Most teaching observed was good and examples of outstanding teaching were observed.
- Teachers set high expectations of learning and conduct to which students respond very positively. Very good relationships between staff and students and a positive working atmosphere are well established.
- Teachers' subject knowledge is very secure and enables well planned steps in learning at all levels. Most lessons are lively, well paced and provide challenging activities.
- Lessons are well planned and purposeful. A good variety of activities in both practical and theory lessons interest and involve students and often promote creative approaches and independence in learning.
- Students are aware of their target levels or grades. Teachers give useful guidance in lessons and in the way students work is marked. However, in some lessons, lesson objectives or success criteria do not identify the knowledge, skills and understanding needed to reach different levels or grades specifically enough and individual students are not fully aware of which level or grade they should be aiming for.
- Specialist teaching assistants make a strong contribution to the quality of learning across the department.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Not all students receive two hours of high quality PE per week. Every student has 100 minutes of PE lessons per week and, in Key Stage 3,

15 hours of movement/dance per year. In Key Stage 4 almost a half of students follow accredited courses in PE or dance increasing their involvement.

- The proportion of students taking part in a good and improving range of extra-curricular activities is increasing although more boys than girls are involved on a regular basis.
- New activities, such as 'Free Running', 'Rocketball' and dance clubs have been introduced to the extra-curricular programme. These activities often involve students who, in the past, have not taken part in additional activities.
- A good range of accredited courses and opportunities to develop leadership skills is offered in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- Although the Duke of Edinburgh Award training is a popular extra-curricular activity for sixth form students, there is no regular timetabled opportunity for sport and physical activity for those who are not already involved in accredited courses, leadership activities or school teams.
- Gifted and more able students are well provided for. Individuals have succeeded in wide range of sports including swimming, athletics, Tae Kwan Do, rugby, badminton and table tennis.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is good.

- Strong and enthusiastic leadership of the subject ensures a good team spirit across a large staff with a clear focus on raising standards and improving the quality of provision.
- Self-evaluation is very thorough. There are clear lines of accountability within the subject and to senior leaders through regular monitoring of students' progress and the quality of provision.
- Improvement planning identifies the right priorities and actions. The success of actions taken is not measured specifically enough in relation to their impact on student outcomes such as participation, attendance or progress.
- The accommodation and facilities are limited especially in poor weather. The all-weather area is in very poor condition. The swimming pool enhances provision and many students appreciate this facility.
- There is a good capacity to improve demonstrated in the rising trend in standards, the improving curriculum and the broadening of the extra-curricular provision.

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

- PE makes an important contribution to students' good personal development.
- Most students enjoy PE and dance lessons and other sporting related activities. The wide range of activities offered gives many students the opportunity to succeed.

- Students have a good awareness of how to stay safe in PE. They use apparatus and equipment safely and leadership training enhances their awareness and understanding of how to stay safe.
- Students are well versed in how to maintain a healthy lifestyle. They know how to keep to a healthy diet and the well balanced school meals available help them to make healthy choices. They understand the components of fitness and enjoy planning and taking part in training programmes to maintain good health.
- Students make a very positive contribution to the school and local community. Many older students use their leadership skills to work alongside younger students either in lessons or organising tournaments, clubs and other activities. Many students show perseverance and commitment to team training competition.
- Students are very well prepared for the next stage of their education. Many of those following accredited courses wish to continue in sport or dance related training or education and have received good guidance on the routes they may take.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- improve the level of attendance in Year 11 core PE lessons
- increase the proportion of girls involved in sport and dance-related extra-curricular activities
- ensure that students know precisely what knowledge, skills and understanding they should gain in each lesson, and how this is related to the levels or grades they as individuals are aiming to achieve
- increase the proportion of students involved in at least two hours of high quality PE and sport per week and provide more sport and PE opportunities for sixth form students
- ensure that subject improvement planning identifies how actions taken will have an impact on the outcomes for students.

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