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Mr Mansfield
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Mansfield

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education (PE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 19 and 20 May 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 sports status, interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, observation of nine lessons and a range of extra curricular activities.

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

Achievement and standards

Achievement is outstanding.

- Achievement in PE across the school is outstanding because of the quality of teaching. Students make exceptional progress in their skill development and levels of performance across a broad range of activities.
- Standards in Key Stage 3 are significantly above the national average, including the number of students reaching exceptional performance in a diverse range of sports.

- All students take GCSE PE, and standards attained are significantly above the national average, with an exceptionally high proportion of entries achieving A*-A grades.
- A high number of students opt to follow AS and A level PE in the sixth form. They also attain well above average standards.
- The number of individual students and school teams gaining representative honours at county, national and international levels is extraordinarily high. These are recognised in presentation evenings organised by the schools elected sports captains.
- The use of observation, analysis and feedback between students and between staff and students is a strength of the department's work for all ages. The behaviour of students in PE lessons is exemplary.
- Students have outstanding opportunities for personal development through PE, including extensive opportunities to feedback to staff upon provision, and increasingly through a range of leadership activities. Students apply for positions of responsibility, which are considered to be a privilege and undertake those conscientiously, providing excellent role models for younger students.
- The introduction of 'Cooper Cats' has been innovative and inspiring within the school. Gifted and talented students involved in the programme receive excellent support and mentoring to help balance the requirements of high performance together with high academic standards.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is outstanding.

- Teachers' outstanding subject knowledge is used extremely well to develop and extend students' thinking skills and knowledge of the subject. Teachers have very high expectations of students.
- Continuous feedback and use of praise during lessons enables students to have an excellent understanding of how well they are achieving, why, and what else they need to do to improve further. Outstanding relationships exist between students and between staff and students. Due to their enthusiasm and professionalism, staff are excellent role models.
- All staff are highly skilled at using assessment for learning strategies, particularly in encouraging students to raise questions and in developing students' abilities in self and peer assessment, to bring about improvements at a rapid pace.
- Lesson planning is thorough and securely based on in-depth knowledge of each student's prior attainment and preferred learning styles. Lessons are carefully matched to the needs of individuals and are effectively structured to maintain pace, interest and motivation.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT), although a relatively new aspect of the department's work, is proving beneficial in developing students' understanding of their performance and how to improve. Students are particularly enthused by the introduction of the virtual learning environment, especially as it can be accessed from home.

- Excellent support is provided by other school staff and specialist coaches to enhance students' experiences and extend the range of opportunities.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- All students in Key Stage 3 access a minimum of two hours high quality PE each week that is increased to five hours per fortnight in Key Stage 4. Unusually sixth form students also have one hour of programmed provision per week.
- The Year 7 curriculum has been adapted effectively to meet the requirements of the new National Curriculum and has been extended well into Year 8. Innovative arrangements for Year 9 enable students to choose from different pathways of sport. Participation rates are high.
- The curriculum in Key Stage 4 has been broadened, as a result of student feedback, to include a wider range of non-traditional activities, for example the triathlon and water polo, and students say 'there is something for everyone'. These new choices have improved behaviour and attitudes towards the subject from the very small minority of pupils who were less enthusiastic. Consequently, high levels of student participation are maintained in Key Stage 4.
- Students have an outstanding range of extra curricular activities from which to choose. The take up rate is extremely high across all age groups. Up to 150 students are regularly involved in a Saturday programme of sport. An extensive range of enrichment activities enhances the students' experiences further. For example, competing in a netball competition in Barbados, dance in preparation for the opening ceremony of the 2012 Olympics, and the Voices for a Better World project.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- Leadership at all levels in the PE department ensures highly effective provision and outcomes. Staff have a thorough understanding of the strengths and areas for development of the department, based upon extensive self-evaluation, monitoring and the views of students.
- They are continuously looking at how to provide the best opportunities for students, for example the new admissions procedure for selecting students according to sporting aptitude.
- Thorough regular assessment, securely moderated within the department, ensures that staff, students and parents are fully aware of how well students are doing and their targets for improvement. Students identified as underachieving have specifically tailored intervention and mentoring programmes to ensure they make the expected progress. The school's assessment procedures, when applied

in PE, have been identified by the local authority as good practice, and are consequently being disseminated in local schools.

- Staff have many opportunities for professional development and sharing good practice within the department, such as the use of ICT. Senior and subject leaders are adept at using staff expertise and colleagues learn from each other's strengths.
- The specialist sport status has a significant impact within PE and ensures that the subject has a high profile around the school. Facilities have been enhanced and are used extensively by both students and other local community groups. PE staff lead sporting activities in neighbouring primary schools, supported by older students.
- The impact of specialist sports status is also seen across the curriculum in the 'international days' where students participate in a wide range of cross curricular activities related to sport and health.

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

Students have very good awareness of how to live a healthy active lifestyle and the vast majority choose to put this into practice. All students spoken to say how much they enjoy the subject and this is evident in the high participation and levels of engagement in both lessons and extra curricular activities. Good attention is paid to students' safety including developing their understanding of the importance of warming up before activity; personal survival in water based activities; and using space safely indoors and outdoors. Students make an extremely positive contribution to the local community through their leadership roles in the school and with local primary schools and through their commitment and involvement in both school and local sports clubs.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- monitor the impact and effectiveness of the new selection process upon achievement and standards in PE.

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