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Mr M Featherstone
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Dear Mr Featherstone

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education (PE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 and 14 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 technology status, interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of lessons.

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

Achievement and standards

Students' achievement from their starting points is outstanding during Key Stage 3 and good in Key Stage 4 and GCSE.

- Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are above average and well above average at the higher Level 6, with nearly half of students attaining this standard. Girls initially make a slower start but the rate of progress and gap in attainment has closed by the end of Year 9.
- Standards in GCSE PE are in line with the national average and have been on a rising trend in recent years. The number of entries is above

the national average and students attain well in comparison to other subjects; frequently achieving their best results in PE.

- Progress in the lessons observed was good or better for all students. It was outstanding when work was carefully matched to meet their needs and when it provided significant challenge to extend their knowledge, understanding and skills.
- Students in all lessons are guided extremely well to use the 'evaluate and improve' strand of the PE National Curriculum, particularly in Year 7.
- Staff provide good opportunities for students identified as gifted and talented and those with learning difficulties and/or disabilities. Gifted and talented students are extended well through leadership and coaching roles with their peers and younger students in lessons and extra curricular activities. They have good individual mentoring to help them maintain a balance between their academic and sporting requirements.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities have specific programmes with a specialist teaching assistant to support improvements in co-ordination, performance and social skills through a variety of PE situations.
- Personal development is an outstanding aspect of the departments work. All students spoken to say how much they enjoy PE. Attitudes and behaviour in PE lessons are exemplary. Students have outstanding opportunities to feedback on provision through regular questionnaires and the sports council; these have led to positive changes, for example to the Key Stage 4 core PE programme. Students have good opportunities to become class sports captains. Although students have a wide range of opportunities to undertake leadership roles, there are limited opportunities for them to take accreditation in leadership. Staff have good plans in place to improve this.

Quality of teaching and learning of PE

The quality of teaching and learning is good overall with elements that are outstanding.

- All staff have outstanding subject knowledge. They use an excellent range of technical language and PE specific terminology with all age groups to extend students' knowledge and understanding of the subject.
- A strength of all teaching is the use of open ended question and answer techniques to probe students' knowledge and deepen their ability to analyse, evaluate and suggest improvements to their own and others' work.
- In the consistently outstanding teaching observed, expectations and pace were extremely high, the level of challenge raised students' ambition and self confidence, and consequently students made outstanding progress.

- In the majority of lessons a good range of activities and equipment are used to meet the needs of students of different levels of ability within a class.
- Staff use a good range of teaching methods to engage students in learning; they are skilled at observing and intervening with individuals or the whole class at the right time to bring about improvements. Occasionally students' abilities suggest that they are capable of being challenged and moved on in their skill development even more quickly.
- Planning for lessons is thorough and makes good use of prior learning and assessment data to set work appropriate to the students' needs. Students in Key Stage 3 have very good awareness of their targets, how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further. The gathering and use of baseline data for Year 7 is a new aspect of the department's work this year and staff have already identified how this can be expanded and improved further.
- The use of information and communication technology for all ages and activities is embryonic. Where this is used well it supports students' analysis and understanding of how to improve. In the GCSE revision class it helped students break down theory exam questions and students in Year 8 explained how it helped them improve their synchronisation in dance.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- Students in Year 7 have two hours of timetabled PE per week that increases to five hours per fortnight for students in Years 8 and 9. Students who access only core provision in Key Stage 4 have the equivalent of one hour of PE per week, which is below the government's expectation. Many students in Key Stage 4 attend extra curricular activities, including Ten Tors outdoor and adventurous activities, to help reach the expected levels of physical education and school sport.
- Increasing numbers are choosing to study GCSE PE. Good plans are in place to increase opportunities to offer a broader range of qualifications including National Diplomas and national governing body awards.
- The majority of current units of work are short at between six and eight hours but these have been appropriately extended through the revised schemes of learning for Year 7.
- Positive changes have been made in recent years to the Key Stage 4 core curriculum to better engage students, especially girls. Changes frequently arise as a result of feedback from students through the questionnaires and sports council work. Students are particularly positive about the opportunities to participate in golf, dance mats, kick boxing and climbing.
- The Year 7 curriculum has been effectively altered to meet the expectations of the new National Curriculum. Students have good opportunities for problem solving and finding their own creative

solutions to tasks. Dance has been introduced to the girls' programme this year and staff are rightly exploring how this can be extended further.

- Current schemes of work support teaching well. Staff are in the process of reviewing these to better match the expectations of the new National Curriculum and to place more emphasis on students' learning outcomes. The departmental manager has identified the need to make clear the links between the revised schemes of learning, students' learning outcomes and assessment procedures, although this is yet to be consolidated.
- An extensive range of extra curricular opportunities is well attended by students from all age groups.

Leadership and management of PE

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The departmental manager has outstanding knowledge and understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of the department's work based on the outcomes of secure monitoring and evaluation activities. The department's self evaluation form is a comprehensive analysis of its work leading to clear priorities for development. The department's action plan is tightly linked to both whole school as well as department priorities. Because all PE staff make valuable contributions to the evaluation of provision it results in a collaborative and ambitious approach to future improvements.
- The departmental manager is visionary and sets high expectations for both staff and students. His enthusiasm and drive, department members' involvement with whole school initiatives and support from senior leaders ensures that PE has a high profile around the school.
- New procedures for assessing and tracking students' progress enable staff and students to have a better understanding of how well students are doing and to subsequently set targets and actions to improve further. At times this only focuses on improving areas of weakness and students comment that they could be stretched and challenged further in their areas of strength.
- Staff have good access to professional development to increase subject knowledge and/or teaching methods. Good opportunities are made for PE staff to share their practice both within the department and across the school.
- Deployment of facilities, equipment and staff is a strength of the department. A five year facilities improvement project has already started with the building of an artificial turf pitch.

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

- PE makes a good contribution to the outcomes of ECM. Students have good knowledge of how to lead a healthy lifestyle. They make good links between subjects. For example, students are able to explain how studying pulse rates in science helps them better understand fitness in

PE. Good attention is paid to safety in lessons and students make sensible and informed decisions about the use of working spaces. They have good understanding of the need to warm up to prevent injury. All students spoken to enjoyed PE and said lessons were fun. They make a positive contribution to their own school through suggestions on questionnaires and through the sports council and with local primary schools by running sports sessions.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- establish clear links between schemes of learning, students' learning outcomes and assessment procedures so implementation is consistently applied across the department
- share outstanding practices more widely.

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