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Dear Mr Young

Ofsted 2009-10 subject survey inspection programme: physical education (PE) and citizenship

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit, with Judith Matharu HMI, on 1 and 2 December 2009 to look at work in PE and citizenship.

As outlined in my initial letter, as well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the identification of an area of best practice in PE and its impact on students, and the development of students' political understanding in citizenship.

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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements in PE and citizenship included: impact of the specialist sports status; interviews with staff, students and members of the local community; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; observation of 11 PE lessons, five lessons and an assembly on citizenship and the elective extra-curricular programme.

Physical Education

The overall effectiveness of physical education is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement and enjoyment of learning in PE are outstanding.

- Students attain standards that are above average overall in core PE and dance and across the broad range of examination courses. The attainment

in AS-level PE has shown significant improvement and a good proportion of students attains the highest levels in GCSE PE and BTEC courses. Boys and girls attain equally well.

- The college has high levels of success in regional and national events with both individual athletes and school teams. A good number of students has either gained representative honours at international level or are part of development squads.
- Progress in all age groups is never less than good and mainly outstanding, especially in examination groups, because of the quality of teaching. Students make rapid progress in developing new skills, and their ability to observe and evaluate their own and others' work to bring about improvements is a strength across the college. Students identified as gifted and talented in PE and sport make consistently outstanding progress in their personal development as well as in their physical skills, supported by the KATS and STARS programme.
- The personal development of students through PE is outstanding. They have very good understanding of developing a healthy lifestyle and actively pursue this through attendance at the elective extra-curricular programme. Students have a real enthusiasm for the subject. They have very positive attitudes towards PE and school sport, and want to achieve and persevere to improve. The student voice is not only sought but responded to and acted on positively to bring about changes in provision.
- Students have an extensive range of opportunities from Year 7 to Year 13 to make a positive contribution to their college and in the wider community. They take responsibilities as sports captains, leaders and councillors very seriously and work diligently to increase and improve opportunities. As one student said about staff, 'they trust us, they give us responsibility and let us get on with it'.

Features of best practice

The impact of the KATS and STARS programme for gifted and talented students is significant. They receive outstanding support from staff to help achieve a balance between their academic work, sporting commitments and home life. They have excellent opportunities to work with professional sports people and experience advanced training methods through a programme of visits and visitors.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Teaching is consistently of the highest quality. Teachers have extremely high expectations of students' physical skill development as well as verbal input to class discussions. Core lessons in Key Stage 4 are pitched at GCSE expectations so that students experience direct teaching and, consequently, make at least good progress.
- All staff have very good subject knowledge and use assessment data well to ensure work is matched extremely well to students' needs, including

differentiated tasks. Older students also recognise that teachers know their preferred learning styles and adapt lessons to suit their needs. Marking of students' work is highly effective. It consistently indicates how to improve, why work is good and in some cases makes reference to class input.

- Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods, assessment strategies and activities to engage, enthuse and motivate students. Lessons are conducted at a brisk pace, with high levels of student/staff interaction. Relationships are excellent. Students are highly appreciative of staff commitment. One said, 'they respect us as much as we respect them'.
- Good use is made of National Curriculum levels of attainment at the end of lessons to review learning and set next steps in learning, although students do not use them enough in self- or peer-assessment.

Features of best practice

Teachers make excellent use of information and communication technology to support learning. Students of all ages use technology to observe, evaluate and feedback on performance during lessons. The college intranet site 'Arthur' is extensively used between students and staff to extend learning remotely.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum is an example of best practice as it is innovative in its approach to personalising learning and meeting student's needs and interests. Consequently, students become inspired. They are excited by the range of opportunities to try new activities. Students in Year 7 are given some initial choice in the activities they want to follow that enables them to meet the new National Curriculum expectations. This is extended further through pathways of learning from Year 9 to Year 11. The curriculum and enrichment programme meets the needs of students with special educational needs and/or disabilities, those with low self-esteem and those that are gifted very well.
- All students have outstanding opportunities to meet not only the two-hour Government expectation for physical education and school sport (PESS) but also for five hours through the elective programme. Sixth-form students have a weekly session for PESS.

Features of best practice

The elective programme and enrichment activities are outstanding. Students have an extensive range of activities on offer every evening that they elect to pursue. Twice a week, when school buses arrive an hour later than usual, over 50% of students elect to take part in a sporting activity. Enrichment, particularly through theme days and residential experiences, really extend their horizons and aspirations for being active in different worldwide environments.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding.

- Leaders at every level in the department have excellent understanding of the strengths and areas for development because monitoring, evaluation and action planning are thorough. Delegated leadership, where all 19 staff have responsibilities, leads to a real sense of drive for continuous improvement, pushing the boundaries and wanting to provide and be the best. Leaders have already identified that assessment and monitoring procedures needs to be extended further.
- The programme of professional development opportunities provided through the training school, school sports partnership and sharing of good practice has led to consistently high-quality teaching in the subject.

Features of best practice:

The impact of the specialist sports status is outstanding. The subject has a very high profile on all three college sites and is making a significant difference for students' perceptions of wanting to be active, their ambitions, and attainment and in their personal development. PE leads on many initiatives across the college and with other local schools, especially in sharing practices to improve the quality of teaching. Several members of the department also lead training at national events in recognition of the quality and impact of their work. The impact of the school sports partnership is also significant in extending provision, supporting programmes with external specialist coaches and providing specific programmes for the full range of students from those identified as gifted and talented to lower-attaining or underachieving students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- fully exploiting assessment and monitoring procedures to:
 - enable all students to understand and use accurately National Curriculum levels of attainment in peer- and self-assessment
 - moderate, monitor and analyse progress in the new National Curriculum expectations to support evaluation of provision.

Citizenship

The overall effectiveness of citizenship is good with some outstanding features.

Achievement and enjoyment in citizenship

Achievement in the subject is good.

- At all key stages, students' achievement and enjoyment in the subject are good. This is due to imaginative approaches in delivering the subject and consistently good teaching. Students demonstrate good knowledge and

understanding of rights and responsibilities, democracy and how government works, the justice system and the role and significance of the media. They demonstrate particularly good understanding of identity and diversity. The school's counsellor has undertaken some key work in celebrating individual differences and diversity, including the publication of the booklet, 'One thing that makes me different...'

- Students of all ages speak confidently about citizenship issues and are comfortable expressing their views. They appreciate that their opinions are sought and valued in school. Many students spoke of enjoying the opportunities to safely explore their thinking in lessons with their peers.
- Students demonstrate particularly good skills in advocacy and representation. A range of opportunities are provided for students to participate in community activities, from extensive fundraising, to local and county youth forum and parliaments, supporting children in sporting activities, advocacy for pupils at a local special school or being part of the local Neighbourhood Action Group. These extensive community activities are valued and celebrated in school. A number of teachers, parents and other adults also engage in international action with a series of trips to places such as Nepal and Uganda to complete community action projects.
- The personal development of students, gained through taking informed and responsible action, is outstanding. This is evident in citizenship activities within the school and in the wider community. Examples include: sixth form students involved in a mock United Nations Day; lower-school students engaged in a 'school of dreams' project with Honda to make a difference in the local community; and many forms of volunteering. All are promoted within the school. Students are leaders in many different contexts, from school and house councils, to peer mentors, sports leaders or as focus group members working on particular projects.
- The regular 'school ethos', 'Big Voice' and 'Little Voice' surveys gain the views of all students on a range of school issues. Students appreciate the frequent consultations and take this seriously. They assume responsibility with confidence and are trusted to take action to improve their school. Consequently, they can explain how they have influenced many aspects of school life. For example, students' feedback has shaped the school behaviour policy, the use of school facilities and, recently, the appointment of a new Principal for 2010.

Quality of teaching of citizenship

The quality of teaching in citizenship is good.

- Lesson observations indicate that consistently good teaching underpins students' achievements in citizenship. Teachers are enthusiastic and energetic in their delivery of the subject. Citizenship objectives are identified in planning and teachers mostly ensure that these are met. Occasionally, opportunities are missed to explore citizenship dimensions, which is an area for development.
- Relationships with staff and between students are very positive, enabling frank, but supportive conversations in lessons. Students enjoy partner and

group discussions and opportunities to form their opinions through these. Teachers' skilful use of questioning is effective in probing students' understanding of topics. For example, in RE, questions to students focused on their attitudes to crime and punishment through their considerations of Shariah law and comparisons to other legal systems. Verbal feedback in lessons is frequently helpful for students, but there are too few opportunities for them to complete written work of depth at present.

- Assessment is satisfactory; there are some key weaknesses with plans in place to tackle these. Assessment procedures require extending to ensure that students' progress across the school is assessed and recorded, in line with statutory requirements.

Quality of the curriculum in citizenship

The quality of the citizenship curriculum is good.

- Curriculum provision is imaginative and innovative in design and includes: the combination of cross-curricular work in named departments; discrete 'theme days' where aspects of citizenship are developed in some detail; and the use of tutorial sessions and reinforcement through assemblies. This has created a shared commitment to the subject across the wider curriculum. Careful mapping of the provision and identification of individual contributions to the curriculum results in a coherent programme.
- The citizenship theme days are planned in detail; they are of particularly good quality and enrich the curriculum significantly. Students value these greatly and enjoy the contributions made by visiting experts and outside agencies.
- This approach ensures that citizenship has a central place within the curriculum of a number of areas, particularly in English, the humanities and arts subjects and science. Consequently, students regard citizenship as a significant and integral dimension of their studies.
- Some aspects are covered in greater detail than others. The opportunities for students to engage in responsible informed action promote particularly good learning. Other aspects are 'lighter touch'; for instance, opportunities to engage in extended enquiry are more limited.
- The enrichment of the curriculum through the 'electives' programme and a full range of trips and visits is outstanding. A full range of exciting activities is planned to provide leadership opportunities and many students gain enormously from these, developing excellent leadership skills and assuming responsibility with confidence and maturity.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in citizenship

The leadership and management of citizenship are good.

- There is strong support evident for active engagement in citizenship from the school's senior leadership team. The ethos and atmosphere in the school strongly reinforce the principles of taking responsibility and demonstrating respect for others. The impact of this is not lost on

students; many of them speak of the value of good citizenship within the school and in the community. Consequently, the vision for the subject has resulted in good cohesion within the school community and beyond through extensive activities in the local community.

- The school's rationale for its curriculum provision and delivery and the importance of practical experiences in taking responsible action is clear and convincing. Strategic planning is thoughtful and consistent with this aim.
- The assistant principal with responsibility for the subject has a clear understanding of subject requirements. Provision has been mapped against statutory requirements to ensure that these are met. The day-to-day organisation and administration of citizenship tutorials and theme days are efficient.
- Self-evaluation is honest and accurate and there is clear understanding of the areas for development. For example, there is ready acknowledgement that the monitoring and evaluation of provision could be more thorough, in line with other subject areas.
- Careful attention is paid to staff and students' feedback in evaluating provision. This school is highly responsive to learners' views and places students' needs at the heart of all improvement activities.

Subject issue: students' political understanding

- Students' political understanding is good, particularly by Key Stage 4. The recent political theme day for Year 11 has had a good impact on students' understanding. Students have a good knowledge of political processes, major political parties and are able to evaluate some of their policies and differences. They are able to compare the democratic rights and responsibilities of citizens in the UK with those in other parts of the world.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- establishing thorough assessment procedures across the curriculum by:
 - gaining agreement about how students' work will be recorded to evidence their knowledge and understanding
 - ensuring that progression in learning can be more easily monitored and recorded
- improving the monitoring and evaluation of provision and outcomes by:
 - determining how citizenship learning will be evaluated by those leaders who are completing monitoring and evaluation activities
 - clarifying the expectations of tutors with regard to teaching and learning in citizenship.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE and citizenship 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