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Mrs J Stevenson
Headteacher
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Dear Mrs Stevenson

Ofsted survey inspection programme – physical education (PE)

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 6 and 7 October 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 the identification of an area of best practice in PE and its impact for students.

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 included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, observation of seven lessons and extra curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of physical education is satisfactory with good features.

Achievement in PE

Achievement is satisfactory.

- Standards in Key Stage 3 and for core Key Stage 4 students are broadly in line with national averages. In 2008, the first year of the PE GCSE, results were in line with the national average. Using unvalidated data for 2009, the PE results fell significantly as many students did not reach their target grades. Current work by students indicates they are in line to return to national levels.

- Progress and learning are satisfactory overall although inconsistencies exist between the progress of different age groups and between boys and girls. Girls tend to achieve better than boys overall.
- Students identified as gifted and talented in PE have an appropriate programme of support and mentoring. Those who attain success outside school are recognised, celebrated and supported well. Equally, those identified as requiring additional support have a broad range of extra curricular activities to support the development of coordination, health and fitness and confidence as well as their physical skills.
- Behaviour is good, but at times this is because students are too passive in lessons. Students have positive attitudes to lessons and most of those spoken to say how much they enjoy PE.

Features of good practice:

- Students have good opportunities to undertake responsibilities in PE, especially in Year 11. They respond positively to the opportunities to become sports prefects, sports leaders and sports captains. Applications for these posts are oversubscribed. These leaders organise and officiate at inter-house competitions and run extra-curricular activities for younger students at the school. They demonstrate high levels of commitment and dedication to the roles.
- Sports leaders in Year 9 are trained to work with primary-aged pupils to coach and support their participation in sports festivals and tournaments.
- Students from both age groups say these opportunities have helped them to become more organised personally and have increased their confidence to talk and work with others.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching is satisfactory overall.

- Teachers have secure subject knowledge and generally use this well to intervene and improve students' work. However, the level of challenge is not consistent, especially for high-attaining students. Students are capable of attaining more. At times, there is too much teacher input and there are not enough opportunities for students to find solutions to tasks. Girls have more opportunities than boys. Limited use is made of information and communication technology other than in GCSE theory lessons.
- New school initiatives, such as effective question and answer sessions, assessment and targets, are starting to have an impact on teaching although they are yet to be embedded and used consistently to improve the rate of students' progress. Where questions have been used effectively, students make more rapid progress in lessons.
- The new assessment procedures include Year 6 data that were completed by one person for consistency. Although staff have collected a year's data these have not been analysed to help staff to understand students' progress in different age groups or by gender. The head of department

has a good understanding of how analysed data can be used to improve provision.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- Unusually, students in core Key Stage 4 have more timetabled PE than those in Key Stage 3, who have one hour and 40 minutes each week. However, time is lost when lessons do not start on time or finish early, contributing to students making satisfactory rates of progress.
- The curriculum is predominantly invasion games, especially in Key Stage 3, although a wider range of opportunities is offered during Key Stage 4. Year 11 students particularly appreciate using the fitness suite. Elements of the new PE National Curriculum are starting to be used in lessons.
- The extra-curricular programme is also games-dominated and staff acknowledge that the same students tend to access activities. The school sports coordinator has started to introduce a broader range of activities to engage more students. For example, boxercise, dance mats, Year 7 Friday club and a health club.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good.

- The head of department has a thorough and realistic understanding of the strengths, weaknesses and priorities for development. She is a good role model for teaching and is unafraid to tackle difficult issues. As a result, the department is moving forward and improving provision, student opportunities and achievements.
- Monitoring activities, including the subject review completed in May 2009, are thorough and lead to a clear plan of action with realistic timescales for continuous improvement.
- Staff have benefited from professional development that is leading to restructured lessons, using a broader range of teaching methods.
- Resources and facilities are good and support teaching well. PE displays include useful information on National Curriculum levels of attainment, local sports clubs and how students can build learning power.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- analysing assessment data to ensure a secure profile of students' progress, and using this to improve provision
- finding ways to improve standards and progress in GCSE, including working with experienced staff
- improving the consistency and rate of progress across different age groups and between boys and girls

- improving the quality and consistency of teaching through:
 - better use of time
 - embedding the use of targets and areas for improvement with students
 - ensuring challenge is planned for all students, especially the higher attaining
 - sharing areas of identified good practice more often.

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