

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 08456 404040  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr G Bell and Mr P Warburton  
Headteacher and Executive Headteacher  
The Romsey School  
Greatbridge Road  
Romsey  
Hampshire  
SO51 8ZB

Dear Mr Bell and Mr Warburton

Ofsted survey inspection programme: Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 13 and 14 October 2009, to look at work in physical education (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 on 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 made included interviews with staff and students, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work, observation of nine lessons and enrichment activities.

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

#### Achievement in PE

Achievement is outstanding.

- Standards in GCSE PE have been well above average for the last three years, especially in relation to the number of students attaining the higher A\* to A grades. Unvalidated results for 2009 show a decline, although this was predicted and standards remain above average. Future targets signal a return to the highest levels and work seen indicates students are on

track to attain target grades. Standards by the end of Key Stage 3 are also significantly above the national average.

- School data and progress observed in lessons show students make outstanding progress from their average starting points. Students with special educational needs make the same progress as others because activities are planned to meet their needs and there is excellent support from learning support assistants.
- Students identified as gifted and talented in PE have a well-designed STARS programme that helps them attain a good balance between their sporting and academic commitments.
- Students' personal development through PE is exceptional both in lessons and through additional responsibilities. Behaviour is exemplary, attitudes are extremely positive and all students spoken to say how much they enjoy the subject. Students are guided to understand the etiquette of sport well and consequently listen to and respect each others opinions and accept triumph and defeat equally well.

### Features of best practice

The impact of the sports council's work is significant and begins when councillors are interviewed and appointed by older students. They have high levels of responsibilities. For example, they collect and analyse students' views through a comprehensive questionnaire and then present their findings to PE staff, resulting in changes to curriculum and extra-curricular activities. Councillors and sports leaders have total responsibility for the organisation and officiating of six inter-house competitions per year and have introduced a sports award evening to celebrate their peers' achievements. Councillors initiated a challenge cup event with another local school, including initial meetings to set expectations, where students from the two schools compete in a variety of sports. Two young sports ambassadors represent the school with external partners, including making a presentation on the impact of PE to help gain the National Healthy Schools Award.

### Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Teaching is of a very high standard. Where the teaching observed was consistently outstanding, students were inspired and motivated to achieve highly and made exceptional progress in their understanding, knowledge and physical skill development.
- A strength of teaching is the use of extended, open-ended questions that challenge students' thinking and help them to find independent solutions to tasks. Staff have strong subject knowledge that is used well to plan lessons matched to students' abilities. They also make good use of

students' prior learning to set clear learning outcomes, combined with realistic and challenging tasks.

- All students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve further because of high quality verbal and written feedback. Assessment procedures are good in Key Stage 3 and GCSE, and include a range of opportunities for students to assess their own work. Students' progress in core Key Stage 4 PE lessons is not assessed.
- Teachers use a wide variety of teaching methods and assessment strategies that engage students in learning. The pace and structure of lessons are good, resulting in students being active for the majority of time. Students respond positively to teachers high expectations for verbal input and participation, and consequently persevere to improve.
- Relationships between staff and students are very positive and lead to an ethos of mutual respect. All students comment that staff are approachable and respond positively to their suggestions and/or concerns.

### Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum is good.

- The curriculum provides a good breadth of experiences and opportunities across the key stages. However, during Key Stage 3 the curriculum is dominated by games so there is an imbalance of time allocated to activities. Students have a broad choice of activities in Key Stage 4, although all pathways of learning include a major team game and some older students comment this does not always suit their preferences. Students are particularly enthused by the opportunities for street dance, street surfing and golf.
- All students in Key Stage 3 have two hours of timetabled PE with additional time for dance through the creative arts faculty. Only one hour is allocated for core Key Stage 4 PE, resulting in a minority of students, who do not take GCSE or attend extra-curricular activities, not meeting the government expectation of two hours PE and school sport each week.
- GCSE dance has been added to the curriculum this year where previously this had been offered as an out of school hours opportunity. Staff are expanding the range of qualifications available through the introduction of the Diploma and further young sports leader courses. Good links have been recently created to increase the impact of specialist subjects through orienteering tasks.
- The range of extra curricular and twilight activities is an outstanding element of the department's work. Nearly three quarters of students regularly take up these opportunities.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The head of department has a thorough understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement; he is a good role model for teaching and has created a very successful team. He is supported extremely well by staff who drive their areas of responsibility forward at pace. The department places students' well-being at the heart of their work, they set themselves and students ambitious goals that are attained through a shared commitment to attaining excellence at every level. Students are helped to achieve their best at all times and maximise their potential.
- Staff have good opportunities to share good practice and for professional development. Others would benefit from observing their teaching.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- considering ways to assess students' progress in core Key Stage 4 lessons
- making minor adjustments to the curriculum to attain a better balance of time allocated to activities during Key Stage 3 and to offer a pathway of individual activities during Key Stage 4.

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