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Mrs A Arlidge  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Arlidge

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 16 and 17 November 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 transition between Key Stage 2 and Key Stage 3 and the impact on the continuity of pupils' learning.

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 included interviews with staff and learners; scrutiny of relevant documentation; observation of nine lessons and extra curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good with outstanding features.

Students' achievement is outstanding overall. They make at least good progress by the end of Year 9 and attain standards that are well above the national average because of the quality of teaching. This high standard continues in all examination courses where students consistently attain well above national averages in GCSE and A-level PE. A very small number of students take A-level Dance and they also attain well. All students in the core Key Stage 4 lessons observed were making good progress. PE leaders recognise the need to extend the assessment and monitoring procedures to include Key Stage 4 core students to celebrate further their improvements, including leadership and personal skills. Older students and those in Year 9 contribute very positively to the local community through sports leadership. For example, Year 9 students support partner primary school sports days, and

Key Stage 4 and sixth-form sport and dance leaders run an extensive range of festivals, tournaments and clubs in Wellsway and partner primary schools. The elected sports council is increasingly taking the initiative to extend and improve opportunities further across the school.

Provision in PE is good overall. Teaching is consistently good and at times outstanding. All staff have very high expectations of students and relationships are excellent. This has led to an atmosphere of mutual respect where students thoroughly enjoy the subject and persevere to improve their work. A good variety of strategies is used across the department to engage students in learning, including peer assessment. However, learning outcomes in units of work are not always focused sharply enough and activities in lessons are not planned consistently to meet the needs of different levels of ability. A strength of the department's work is the consistent use of question and answer techniques to guide students to find a variety of solutions to tasks and suggest improvements. In outstanding teaching, questioning really extends students' original thinking and leads to independently initiated activities to improve their own work. Teachers use their subject knowledge well to observe and intervene with feedback to improve skills and knowledge of the activity.

All students in Key Stages 3 and 4 have the opportunity for at least two hours of planned PE and sport. The curriculum is broad and innovative pathways of learning have been introduced in Key Stage 4. Students are excited by the choice and variety of activities available in lessons and as part of the extra-curricular programme. Unusually, sixth-form students have an afternoon of sport each week. The programme includes a good variety of activities, makes good use of local facilities and is well attended. The sixth-form inter-house netball and rugby teams display impressive levels of commitment and very high standards of play.

Leadership of the subject is good with outstanding features. Procedures to monitor and evaluate the department's work are comprehensive. Consequently, leaders have a thorough understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement. Subject leaders have a good understanding of the need to bring about even greater consistency in practices across the department. Good opportunities exist for all members of the department to take responsibilities and lead initiatives, although evaluations of action are not focused consistently on the impact for students. All staff, including those in the school sports partnership, are constantly looking for the next initiative to improve provision even further. Impact of the specialist sports status has been significant for the development of PE, with senior leaders offering good support and challenge to the PE department.

There are a number of effective practices in place to support pupils' transition across the key stages.

- Positive working relationships and open communication have been established at senior manager and subject levels and with the local sports coordinator.

- A very good transfer record, which is completed at the junior school and passed to the PE department in the secondary school, provides Year 7 teachers with a baseline of National Curriculum attainment from which to make their initial assessments. Staff in the PE department use the information well to identify students who are gifted and talented in PE and students who require additional support, and to help all students understand the progress they make from their starting points.
- Gifted and talented students are provided with a good range of extension and challenge activities organised through the sports partnership. A small group of students are identified and invited to attend a club to help to improve their physical skills. Leaders acknowledge that more needs to be done to ensure students' consistent attendance to bring about subsequent improvements.
- Regular opportunities are provided for pupils in partner primary schools to visit the secondary school to take part in sporting events and festivals, including the chance for Year 6 pupils and Year 7 students to work together in a dance performance.
- Students from Years 9 to 13 act as positive role models and help to lead and manage sports activities that are organised at the secondary school and clubs that are organised at the junior school.
- Promising initiatives are being planned, such as an extension of the leadership pathway to include responsibilities which straddle Years 6 and 7.
- Good procedures are in place to support the transfer between Key Stages 3 and 4. The Year 9 curriculum has been revised to include a broader range of opportunities and for students to start making choices about the activities they want to study in depth. Year 9 students also experience sample theory and practical GCSE and BTEC lessons, alongside other guidance, to support their decisions on whether to choose a PE examination course in Key Stage 4. More students than average take up these opportunities.
- Students in the sixth form are highly effective mentors to GCSE students in Key Stage 4.

Areas for improvement in transition, which we discussed, include:

- evaluating the effectiveness of the transfer record for pupils moving to Year 7 and assuring the accuracy with which teachers are assessing pupils' attainment in PE
- sharpening the analysis of the Year 6 transfer data to provide the department with a more in-depth view of students' starting points across the areas of learning, for example, the relative attainment of boys and girls and any differences in the attainment between games, gymnastics and dance
- using the analysis to support further judgements on students' progress

- sharing teaching approaches and curriculum planning to strengthen the continuity of provision between the key stages
- adapting the effective transition procedures within the school to strengthen further transfer between Key Stages 2 and 3.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE in the school and transition between Key Stages 2 and 3.

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