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Ms Tolley
Headteacher
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Dear Ms Tolley

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 18 and 19 November 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 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.

The evidence used to inform the judgements included: interviews with staff and students; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of extra-curricular activities and six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of physical education is satisfactory.

Achievement in PE

Achievement is satisfactory.

- In the lessons observed, most students made good progress in their learning, although the restricted curriculum time limits long-term progress for all students not following an accredited course. Students develop and apply skills in games satisfactorily but there are few opportunities for creative work. Knowledge of how to develop a healthy lifestyle is secure. Most students enjoy lessons, focus well on the tasks, work well in groups and many become effective leaders.

- The small number of students identified as gifted and talented make good progress overall. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities and those from minority ethnic backgrounds make similar progress to other students in the school.
- The 2009 GCSE PE results were above average and a significant improvement on previous year's results which were well below average. Current Year 11 GCSE and BTEC students are on track to exceed challenging targets.
- Behaviour, participation and attitudes are good in Key Stage 3 and examination courses in Key Stage 4. A small but significant minority of Key Stage 4 students do not enjoy PE because the activities do not interest them.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching is good

- Very positive relationships between staff and students ensure that students behave well and rise to the high expectations of staff.
- Lessons are mostly planned well so that there are good levels of activity and tasks are well-matched to students' needs.
- Students know the purpose of lessons because lesson objectives are clear. However, it is not clear how these relate to levels or course criteria.
- Students benefit from assessing their own and each other's work.
- Students following exam courses have good guidance on how to improve and reach their target grades. In core PE, they are less clear about what they must do to reach their targets.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning in BTEC courses. It is used infrequently to support learning in core PE lessons.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum is inadequate.

- The curriculum time allocated to PE is less than two hours in Key Stages 3 and 4 which is below the Government's expectation. A good programme of extra-curricular activities boosts students' involvement in high-quality PE and school sport. However, too many students do not have access to at least two hours.
- Opportunities for swimming are a strength but the range of activities offered in Key Stage 4 core PE is limited.
- The curriculum has not been adjusted to take account of the new National Curriculum requirements.
- The school provides good opportunities to develop leadership skills but not all students have the opportunity to gain a recognised qualification.

- A satisfactory range of accreditation includes BTEC certificate sport and GCSE PE and sport. More boys than girls take up these opportunities.
- Well planned cross-curricular days support students' secure knowledge and understanding of how to stay healthy.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management is satisfactory.

- Systems to monitor and evaluate provision identify appropriate priorities but consultation with students about their views is limited. Success criteria in the department improvement plan are not related closely enough to the outcomes for students. Professional development has focused well on improving accredited courses and has led to better results.
- There is limited time available for the leadership role to be carried out so that some priorities and actions have not happened quickly enough.
- Facilities for sport and swimming are excellent but are more limited for creative activities.
- PE has a high profile in the school and contributes to the school's positive ethos.

Features of best practice

Sport and physical education provide the cornerstone for the outstanding relationships the school has developed with the local community where excellent facilities are used by high numbers of local people. Sports clubs run by the community on the school site involve large numbers of current and past students. Many students are involved in the Youth Action Project. They are gaining experience and accreditation for sports leadership and contributing significantly to running sports and activities within the community. The facilities are well used by pupils from local primary schools. Students help to organise numerous events that are well-attended by parents and that bring people of all ages together with a common purpose. Students have successfully campaigned for improved sporting facilities in the area.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring all students experience at least two hours high-quality PE and sport and find ways for more to experience at least three hours
- improving systems for assessment so that all students are clear of their long-term targets and know what they must do to reach them
- providing more opportunities to gain leadership qualifications
- developing the curriculum in response to students' interests and ensuring that expectations of the new National Curriculum are taken into account
- consulting students on a more regular basis for their views
- extending the use of ICT to support learning in more lessons

- identifying clear success criteria in improvement planning that relate to students' achievements and other outcomes
- ensuring that sufficient time is allowed to fulfil leadership and management roles effectively.

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

Gillian Salter-Smith
Additional Inspector