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Mr R Kitching
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Kitching

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 26 and 27 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 nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement is outstanding.

- Learning and progress, overall, are outstanding. Students are highly committed to PE and sport. They concentrate hard and are determined to improve. They are confident when working independently. Students have a strong commitment to an active and healthy lifestyle. Levels of performance and decision-making skills are above average. Students' ability to evaluate and improve performance is very strong. Participation rates are high and behaviour is very good.

- GCSE, BTEC and A-level PE results are above average. Students currently following these courses are on track to exceed very challenging targets.
- Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities achieve similarly to others and are supported very well.

Features of best practice

Students' leadership skills are outstanding and a very high proportion gain accreditation for leadership from Year 9 through to the sixth form. Students use their skills exceptionally well to lead and manage daily 'active lunchtimes' that include a wide range of sporting activities such as dodge ball and computer fitness games. The elected student sports council is highly effective. They have initiated and organised a house system that provides a structure for competition not only in sport and PE but across all subjects. These leadership skills prepare students exceptionally well for their futures and enable them to make an excellent contribution to the school and local community.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is outstanding.

- An exceptionally positive learning ethos is well established and relationships between students and staff are very positive. Students are fully engaged and they say that lessons are fun and challenging.
- Lessons are structured very carefully. They include a wide variety of activities that provides a high level of challenge in developing the whole student and not solely the physical skills. Tasks are matched closely to students' abilities and prior learning.
- Learning outcomes for lessons refer to course requirements and individual students' target grades in examination courses so that students know exactly what they are trying to achieve.
- Students benefit a great deal from completing peer- and self-assessment, particularly in examination classes.
- Teachers' highly secure subject knowledge ensures that guidance is pertinent and leads to improvement. Teachers' questioning is probing, recognising how students think and challenging them to think more deeply, particularly in theory lessons. Teachers are very willing to provide individual support.

Features of best practice

Outstanding use of information and communication technology (ICT) supports students' progress, particularly their ability to evaluate and improve performance. ICT is incorporated into every unit of work in core PE and includes analysis of filmed footage of students' own performance. Individual notebooks are used exceptionally well to support examination coursework.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum in PE is outstanding.

- The curriculum is planned exceptionally well and meets students' needs very well. The new National Curriculum is being piloted in Year 9. A very good choice of pathways in Key Stage 4 core PE provides a wide variety of activities that interest and motivate students.
- An excellent range of accreditation in Key Stages 4 and 5 provides a variety of pathways into sport and PE. Sixth-form students, not following accredited courses, have the option of taking a course in leadership, but further opportunities to participate in sport and physical activity are more limited.
- The outstanding extra-curricular programme focuses on participation and success. The substantial number of students identified as gifted and talented follow a very good programme that develops their attributes more fully and supports them in their chosen sports.

Features of best practice

- The Young Apprentice in Sport programme in Key Stage 4 provides a vocational route to prepare for a sporting vocation. It is a highly popular and exceptionally challenging course that includes GCSE and BTEC Diploma accreditation and sport-related work-placements.
- The Football Development programme, for around 20 sixth-form students who may not otherwise have continued their education, is highly successful in supporting students' academic achievement and personal development. The students provide highly positive role-models for younger students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- The leadership team demonstrates an exceptionally strong commitment to inclusion and success for all in its broadest sense. The highly committed team shares the values of this sports college and continually strives to find ways to use sport and PE to develop the whole student.
- A very rigorous approach to monitoring and evaluation results in improvement plans that are focused clearly on priorities and outcomes for students. Monitoring of students' progress in core PE is used less strategically to identify areas for improvement.
- The Sports College is making a particularly significant contribution to developing high-quality learning and teaching, not only in the school but across the federation and the local partnership.
- The capacity for further improvement is outstanding.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- making more strategic use of data on students' progress in core PE to identify areas for improvement
- providing more opportunities for sixth-form students to take part in physical activity and sport.

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