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Mr Russell  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Russell

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of your staff, during my visit on 3 and 4 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 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 and observation of six lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good.

Achievement in PE

Achievement is good.

- Most students make good progress and rise to the challenge of demanding tasks. They are enthusiastic learners and show commitment and perseverance when tackling practical tasks that aid their progress in improving skills and understanding.
- Behaviour, attendance and participation are good.

- Students collaborate well and work independently of the teacher to plan skills practices. They cooperate well when evaluating activities and apply their knowledge and understanding to each other's performances sensitively. Except for students following accredited courses, knowledge and understanding of how to maintain a healthy lifestyle is weaker.
- Results for GCSE PE are above the national average although few reach the highest grades. Results for BTEC sports studies are above average. Most students reach or exceed their challenging targets in the BTEC course but fewer students reach their targets in the GCSE course. Results for A level are average overall and reflect satisfactory progress.
- Girls and boys achieve similarly, although there are fewer girls taking accredited courses. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities make similar progress to other students. Gifted and talented students are identified and are encouraged to pursue excellence in chosen activities.
- An increasing number of students show competent leadership skills, supporting both clubs within the school and activities in the community.

Features of best practice:

- A number of students show a high level of commitment and strong leadership skills in the support they offer during regular swimming sessions for students with disabilities from a nearby school.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching is good.

- Relationships are very positive and expectations of behaviour and learning are good.
- The purpose of lessons is made clear so students are well focused and are clear of what is expected of them.
- Effective planning ensures that lessons are structured well and that activities build on previous learning. Learning outcomes are pitched at different levels but these are not always applied specifically enough to individuals so there are occasions when more able students are not fully challenged.
- Staff intervene very effectively in lessons and constantly remind students of how to improve and what is required to reach the next levels.
- Students have clear targets to work towards and benefit from regular involvement in assessing their own and other's progress. Occasionally, too much time is lost to more formal assessment procedures, where students write down what they see at the expense of time needed to practise, improve and develop skills.
- The marking of GCSE and A-level work is regular and sets out clearly what students should do to improve. It is not always clear how students are

expected to respond to this guidance. Marking is not always of a similar quality in other courses.

- Information and communication technology (ICT) is used well to support learning in accredited courses but is used less frequently in other lessons.

#### Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the curriculum is satisfactory.

- A good range of accreditation is offered to students in Years 10 and 11 and includes GCSE, BTEC sports studies and performing arts. Leadership courses are offered for sport and dance.
- Students in Years 10 and 11 appreciate the increased choice of activities they can pursue in core PE lessons, although learning in some parts of the programme is not structured well.
- Elements of the new National Curriculum have been incorporated into the schemes of work in Key Stage 3. A small number of different activities, such as Ultimate Frisbee, have been introduced into Year 9 to broaden experiences. The range of activities offered in Key Stage 3 is mostly traditional and there is no choice of activities. The development of knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles is not planned systematically enough.
- The curriculum provision is less than two hours for students in Year 9, 10 and 11 and the proportion of students experiencing at least three hours of high-quality PE and sport is limited.
- Other than for the A-level course, opportunities for PE and sport are more limited in the sixth form. There is no clear pathway for students wishing to continue with vocational sports courses.
- A good range of extra-curricular and inter-form competitions are provided. The range of these has improved this year so that the number of students taking part has increased significantly.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management is good.

- Leadership provides clear educational direction and sets high standards for students and staff. Targets for individual students and the subject as a whole are challenging but realistic.
- The department works well as a team and is focused strongly on raising standards and improving provision.
- Rigorous monitoring and evaluation of students' progress and the quality of provision is leading to clear priorities. Department planning sets out relevant priorities. However, there is no clear link to the expected impact on outcomes.

- Professional development and in-service training is focused well on the department and school priorities and is leading to improved practice.
- The capacity to improve further is good and is demonstrated in improvements in the quality of marking in Key Stages 4 and 5, increased participation in extra-curricular activities and improving opportunities for leadership.
- Limited outdoor and indoor facilities and the lack of a dedicated classroom pose restrictions to the breadth of curriculum opportunities that can be provided.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising attainment and progress for the more able students, particularly in the GCSE courses
- improving students' knowledge and understanding of healthy lifestyles
- improving the proportion of students that has access to at least three hours of high-quality PE and school sport
- improving the pathways for students from age 14 to 19 by broadening the range of accredited courses offered to students in the sixth form
- further developing the Key Stage 3 curriculum in line with new requirements
- continuing to do all that is possible to improve the facilities and accommodation.

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