

Aviation House
125 Kingsway
London
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231
F 020 7421 6855
enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk
www.ofsted.gov.uk



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Mr D Jones
Principal
Haberdashers' Aske's Hatcham College
Jerningham Road
New Cross
London
SE14 5NY

Dear Mr Jones

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and pupils, during my visit on 3 and 4 February 2010 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 pupils.

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 pupils; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of pupils' work; observation of nine lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is outstanding.

- Attainment is well above average in all age groups and in examination courses. The elite squads in the sixth form for rugby and football extend further the high academic and physical standards attained across the college. Pupils attain very high standards because of the quality of teaching and there are no differences in the overall attainment of boys and girls throughout the college.
- All pupils make good progress across a range of activities with groups of higher attaining pupils making better than this, especially in the secondary

phase. Pupils are ambitious and determined to succeed because of the encouragement and motivation from staff.

- Pupils have a well-developed understanding of making healthy lifestyle choices. Their skills in observation, evaluation and feedback are exceptional because they are helped to make simple points for improvement in the primary phase and in the secondary phase they are able to feedback specific and comprehensive points for improvement to their peers. Pupils have excellent opportunities to make and apply decisions in games situations and have a very good understanding of safety, particularly when using fitness equipment.
- Pupils have outstanding opportunities for personal development through PE. They accept and respond very positively to opportunities for leadership in lessons and when working with younger pupils. Pupils have a wealth of opportunities to experience different roles in lessons and are particularly good while coaching each other. All pupils spoken to say they enjoy PE and this is reflected in excellent behaviour, very positive attitudes towards their learning and high levels of participation in lessons and enrichment activities. Pupils are given some opportunities to feedback their views on PE provision and staff have good plans in place to extend this further.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is outstanding.

- All teaching observed was good or better. The pace in all lessons was excellent with swift transition between tasks to ensure pupils were engaged in physical activity for the majority of time. All staff have very high expectations that pupils respond to positively and that inspire them to achieve their best at all times.
- Staff have good subject knowledge that they use to observe and intervene at the right time to give pupils the next step in their learning. All pupils know how to improve their work further because of the quality of verbal and written feedback in lessons. The specialist teaching and professional development support in the primary phase have improved teachers' subject knowledge rapidly and have had a very positive impact on improving pupils' experiences and outcomes.
- Schemes of work in the primary phase make good use of commercial materials that support teaching well. Secondary phase schemes have been adapted very effectively to meet the needs of the new National Curriculum expectations.
- Assessment procedures have been introduced to the primary phase and secondary procedures have been effectively adapted to match the new schemes of work. Good use is made of National Curriculum levels of attainment for pupils' self-assessment and for staff to monitor pupils' progress over time. Although staff consistently challenge pupils in lessons and they subsequently reach standards higher than expected, this is not always reflected in planning or teachers' assessments, especially for the highest attaining pupils.

Features of best practice

- Where teaching was consistently outstanding, planning to meet the needs of pupils with different abilities, and those with special educational needs and/or disabilities, was exceptional. A very broad range of tasks and equipment were used to ensure every pupil made progress. Questioning techniques continuously challenged and extended pupils' thinking and verbal responses as well as their physical skills.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is outstanding.

- All pupils in the primary phase and Key Stage 3 meet or exceed the expectation for two hours high-quality PE and school sport each week. A very small minority of pupils in Key Stage 4 are currently just below this expectation, but the school is aware of this and staff explore all avenues to try and engage all pupils. There is good provision for sixth form sport and the elite programmes that run alongside A levels are innovative in their approach.
- The primary phase curriculum is broad and offers a good range of activities and experiences. The department acknowledges that the Key Stage 3 curriculum is games heavy but has introduced dance, fitness and some outdoor activities to redress the balance. The programmes offered in core Key Stage 4 and GCSE lessons have a good variety of opportunities, including some non-traditional activities. Pupils are particularly enthusiastic about fencing, handball, fitness and cheerleading. Links with other subjects are creating interesting opportunities to explore PE and sport in other ways, especially in English, drama and through foreign languages.
- An excellent range of accreditation opportunities is offered to secondary phase pupils with examination courses, National Governing Body coaching and officiating awards as well as leadership.
- The extra-curricular programme is extensive and has high levels of participation from all age groups. It is particularly pleasing to see the greater range of opportunities available for pupils in Key Stages 1 and 2, including the use of external coaches with expertise in gymnastics and football. Good links are in place for pupils' routes into local sports clubs and to work with professional athletes at different times throughout the year.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- Leadership of both phases sets an ambitious pathway for continuous improvement. Monitoring of the subject is comprehensive and results in an accurate evaluation of provision. Leaders know the strengths of the subject well and are always looking for the next improvement which is reflected in a comprehensive departmental development plan. Other staff

are equally committed to providing the best opportunities for pupils of all ages. The head of department is an excellent role-model in teaching.

- Teachers have a wide range of opportunities for professional development through the training school, federated activities and external courses. Support for newly qualified teachers makes best use of staff's expertise and strengths.
- Impact of the federation with a specialist sports college, the school sports partnership and the greenhouse schools project is significant in increasing the breadth of opportunities in both the curriculum and enrichment activities.

Features of best practice

- The advanced skills teacher is highly skilled in her delivery of PE across all age groups. Others would benefit from observing her use of question and answer sessions to extend pupils' knowledge, understanding and skills; her use of differentiated tasks to match the needs of all pupils in a class and the use of National Curriculum levels of attainment to motivate and challenge pupils of all abilities.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- embedding the new assessment procedures and reviewing the schemes of work to reflect the lesson ambitions of National Curriculum levels of attainment, especially for higher attaining pupils
- increasing the number of pupils that attain the expectation for two hours of high-quality PE and school sport in Key Stage 4.

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 the Independent Academies Association 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