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Mr R Aird
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Aird

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

Thank you for your hospitality and cooperation, and that of the staff and students, during my visit on 9 and 10 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 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, observation of seven lessons and other activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good with outstanding aspects.

- Students make good progress overall from their low starting points because of the quality of teaching and support. Students in Key Stage 4 and/or those with profound multiple or moderate special educational needs and/or disabilities make outstanding progress.
- School data and outcomes seen in lessons show students' attainment is at least average and above average in Key Stage 4 in comparison with other special schools. Occasionally, more able students are not challenged enough and are capable of attaining more.

- Students have good opportunities to acquire and apply new skills in a range of activities and settings. Occasionally, not enough time is given for students to consolidate their skills fully before moving to the next task. Students have a well-developed understanding of making healthy lifestyle choices and have very good knowledge of the benefits of warming up the body in preparation for exercise. Students are good at evaluating each other's performances and making suggestions on how to improve further.
- All students enjoy PE lessons and extra-curricular activities. They are fully engaged in learning either independently or through excellent individual support from teachers and teaching assistants. Students in the sixth form have good opportunities to feedback on provision; their voice is sought and responded to positively. For example, cheerleading is now included in their PE programme following their suggestions.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is outstanding.

- Teaching is at least good with much that is outstanding. A consistent strength is the use of assessment data, combined with teachers' in-depth knowledge of students' needs, to set a broad range of differentiated tasks in every lesson.
- Lessons are structured well to enable good pace and swift transition between tasks. All staff have extremely high expectations of students' physical and verbal input to lessons. Staff use their good subject knowledge very effectively to observe and intervene at the right time to improve the quality of students' work. Staff know students very well and relationships between staff and students are outstanding.
- The school's procedures for assessment and tracking are exemplary and lead to appropriate and secure targets for individual students to help maximise their progress. Students know their next steps in learning as these are effectively presented as the next challenge in lessons.
- Good use is made of photographs to record experiences and to exemplify progress in students' evidence files. Subject leaders acknowledge that the use of other modern technologies is an area for further development and have good plans in place to extend its use further.

Features of best practice

- Teachers from mainstream and other special schools would benefit from observing the exemplary teaching by the assistant headteacher and the training instructor in disability. Planning includes individual programmes for each student to extend their motor skills and/or mobility. Excellent intervention ensures every student makes outstanding progress from their starting point in lessons.
- All staff at the school place the care, safety and well-being of students at the centre of their work; there is a palpable determination across the school that every student achieves success.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is good with outstanding aspects.

- Students have a wealth of opportunities for PE and physical development that are adapted well to meet individual needs. The combination of the specialist curriculum and focus groups ensure students with complex needs make good progress in a range of activities. All students have good opportunities to experience games, outdoor and adventurous activities, swimming and dance. Students are particularly enthusiastic about 'taste for adventure', trampolining and riding.
- Students have outstanding opportunities to meet and exceed the Government expectation for PE and school sport. This is because they have over three hours of planned activities each week during Key Stages 3 and 4 and nearly two hours in the sixth form.
- Students access a wide range of accreditation and awards through PE including ASDAN and sports community awards in the sixth form. Subject leaders are rightly pursuing the re-introduction of the sports leader award for older students. In Key stages 3 and 4 students' motivation and enthusiasm is raised further through working towards certificates in swimming and trampolining.
- A good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities are provided across the school, including the outdoor and adventurous residential visit that enables students to challenge themselves in different environments. Students say how much they enjoy completing the Duke of Edinburgh award, especially expeditions and participation in community service helping others.

Features of best practice

- A strength of the provision is the comprehensive links made between maintaining and extending students' health through PE, the specialist curriculum and physiotherapy programmes.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- Leaders of PE have an extremely good understanding of the strengths and priorities for improvement, based on secure monitoring procedures and evaluation of provision. Priorities are translated effectively into a development plan that focuses on improving provision and achievement further. Although schemes of work have yet to be revised fully to reflect the expectations of the new National Curriculum programmes of study, this is included in the subject development plan. All staff are committed to providing the best opportunities for students.
- Subject leaders use individual students' evidence files effectively to monitor their progress and staff use the same evidence to constantly adapt work to meet the needs of individual students.

- The impact of the school's sports partnership and the specialist status has been significant to extend opportunities through additional competitions and tournaments, outreach work from specialist teachers and/or coaches and funding for resources and equipment.
- PE has a high profile around the school with numerous displays of students' work and extensive resources and equipment. The link with a local business has led to the manufacture of innovative specialist equipment for students in the school.
- The school has worked hard to raise funds that have led to a state of the art studio and hydrotherapy pool with hydraulic floor for easy access for disabled students. They also make excellent use of other local facilities and sports clubs to extend students' experiences.

Features of best practice

- Procedures to assess students' progress in swimming and rebound theory have been devised to recognise and reward small steps in learning and relate extremely well to P levels and National Curriculum levels of attainment. This is exemplary practice that others would benefit from seeing.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- when revising schemes of work, make explicit the links between the specialist curriculum and expectations for each key stage
- ensuring consistency in the challenge for more able students and the use of modern technologies to support assessment.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop PE in the school.

As I explained previously, 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