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Ms R Brookes  
Headteacher  
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Dear Ms Brookes

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 24 and 25 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; analysis of students' work; and observation of 11 lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is outstanding.

- Attainment by the end of Key Stage 3 is well above average and above average overall in the full range of accreditation courses in Key Stage 4. This positive picture is not replicated in the sixth form and the college has taken effective action to tackle this, including changes to the range of courses available.
- Students make outstanding progress overall from low starting points, especially during Key Stage 3, because of the quality of teaching. In the lessons observed, students made consistently good progress in acquiring new skills and in making and applying decisions. The way students work

cooperatively, develop team tactics and listen to each other's views and opinions with respect is a strength.

- Students identified as gifted and talented in PE make outstanding progress overall, although higher attaining students are not challenged consistently in all lessons and are capable of attaining more. The department attains excellent standards and progress with students from armed forces families because of very well-targeted support.
- Students have good opportunities for personal development through PE, especially in the variety of roles they take in lessons, as sports leaders and young ambassadors of sport. Students say this has helped them develop self-confidence in their communication skills when working and talking with others. Although some opportunities are available for students to evaluate and feedback on provision, these are not extensive.
- The vast majority of students thoroughly enjoy PE, reflected in their positive attitudes and good behaviour in and around the PE area. At times, a very small minority of students adversely affects the learning of others when they do not engage in lessons.

#### Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good with outstanding features.

- Staff have consistently high expectations, good subject knowledge and use a good range of teaching methods to engage and stimulate students to want to learn. In a small number of lessons observed, teaching assistants were deployed very well to support individual students or groups and, consequently, these students made good progress.
- Students have good opportunities for independent learning, but occasionally there is not enough direct teaching to ensure all students make good or better progress. The majority of staff uses assessment for learning strategies extremely well, especially to observe students' work and intervene with specific feedback to help them understand how to improve their work further.
- Relationships between staff and students and between students are always good. The pace of learning is good in the vast majority of lessons but occasionally the pace and urgency in work drops and small groups of students drift off task and start to disrupt others.
- Good use is made of external coaches and professional athletes to extend students' opportunities of working with experts in a broader range of activities such as street dance, football and netball.

#### Features of best practice

- A strength of the department's work is the quality of marking for students' coursework in Key Stage 4, which is excellent overall. Staff give comprehensive feedback on why work is good and specific suggestions on how to improve. This leads to good and outstanding progress, especially for those following a GCSE course.

- The department is a national centre for outstanding practice in the use of information and communication technology in PE.

## Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is outstanding.

- The curriculum has been adapted and embedded well to meet the expectations of the new National Curriculum programmes of study. Work is planned to develop students' physical and thinking skills across a broad range of activities. Year 9 students benefit from the sport education programme and boys are particularly motivated by the breadth of tasks and activities.
- All students experience a minimum of two hours high-quality PE each week, with Key stage 4 students having between three and five hours depending on which accreditation route they follow. Those sixth-form students not taking a PE A-level or BTEC qualification have good provision for PE and sport through an enrichment programme.
- The department and sports partnership staff work together well to provide a good range of extra-curricular and enrichment activities. College data indicate high take-up of these opportunities, including some previously reluctant participants, because of the introduction of more non-traditional activities.

## Features of best practice

- The curriculum is highly personalised to meet the needs of students in all age groups. Teachers adapt generic schemes of work to meet the interests and needs of each cohort and class. Programmes include an extensive range of traditional team games and non-traditional activities, such as racquetball, street dance and dance mats, to motivate and engage students with PE. Older students are particularly enthusiastic about the broader range of activities available in lessons and during enrichment programmes.
- Students have outstanding opportunities to gain qualifications in PE and sport during Key Stage 4 and in the sixth form. Following detailed analysis of PE results, the range of courses has been very effectively extended to better meet students' needs including the introduction of dance for higher attaining girls. Students have good opportunities to acquire sports leadership and national governing body awards in coaching and/or officiating. The department has good plans to extend this provision further through the introduction of young apprenticeship and Diploma courses.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- Leadership of the subject is inspirational in setting and attaining high-quality provision for students. The subject leader is an excellent model for teaching and has successfully created an ethos within the department that gets the best from both staff and students.
- Procedures for assessing and monitoring students' achievements are thorough. They have been enhanced further through piloting the assessing

pupils' progress procedures and moderation opportunities within the department and with partner primary schools.

- PE staff have good opportunities for professional development that include a good mix of improving subject knowledge and teaching methods. Areas of best practice from PE are being shared across the college.
- The impact of specialist sport status and the school sports partnership is significant in extending the opportunities for students, supporting more effective transition between primary and secondary education in PE and in improved facilities at the college.
- PE has a high profile in the college with numerous displays in mainly prominent positions. Facilities have been enhanced well since becoming a sports college and there are exciting plans for a new sports hall for September 2010. The PE theory room is a stimulating learning environment with good emphasis on extending literacy skills. However, some equipment and resources are old and need replacement or repair to maintain high-quality provision.

Features of best practice

- Monitoring of the subject is thorough and leads to excellent understanding of the department's strengths and clearly targeted priorities for further improvements which are focused on raising achievements and improving provision further. Subject leadership has created an ethos where staff are always looking for the next challenge and/or activity to ensure students have the best opportunities to achieve success.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- raising the proportion of outstanding teaching by increasing consistency in the challenge for higher attaining students and in the use of assessment for learning strategies to extend fully students knowledge and understanding of their work in all lessons
- extending the opportunities for students to evaluate and feedback on provision.

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