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Mr D Thornton  
Headteacher  
Farringdon Community Sports College  
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Dear Mr Thornton

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 3 and 4 March 2010 to look at work in PE.

As well as looking at key areas of the subject, the visit had a particular focus on the identification of areas of best practice and their 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 documentation, analysis of students' work, and nine lesson observations. I observed the activities taking place at lunchtime, after school and in partner schools. I also discussed your community PE provision.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is outstanding.

- From average starting points, students make rapid progress during Key Stage 3, so that by the end of Year 9 their standards exceed age-related expectations. By the end of Key Stage 4, GCSE PE and dance results far outstrip national averages. The BTEC sport and dance diploma courses enjoy similar success with 98 and 100% pass rates. However, the proportion of students gaining the highest levels and grades could improve further.
- Lesson observations, work scrutiny and school data indicate that these high standards are being sustained among current cohorts, including the recently

introduced Young Apprenticeship in Sports Management, Coaching and Leading. More able Year 9 students are fast-tracked through the BTEC or GCSE courses with equal success. Around 25% of all students passed the BTEC certificate in core lessons. Boys and girls make similar progress. Past students include an Olympic boxer, premiership footballers and international gymnasts.

- PE is having a significant impact on students' personal development. They thrive in the supportive environment provided and gain considerable confidence and competence from the range of sporting, leadership, team working and problem-solving opportunities. Participation rates are high, as is many students' adoption of healthy lifestyles.

#### Features of best practice

- Students' excellent attainment of the key concepts in PE is enabling them to reach high standards and acquire first-rate leadership skills.

#### Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching is outstanding.

- Although PE staff have varying levels of experience and are at different stages of their careers, they share a common passion for sport which is infectious and permeates all that they do. Excellent relationships have been fostered with students, who appreciate the high-quality support, advice and guidance staff provide and the long hours they devote on their behalf. In return, they exhibit ambition and superb attitudes to learning.
- Students are engrossed by the fun, challenge and pace of lessons. The most effective teaching expertly facilitates their rapid progress. Staff achieve this by using a range of innovative strategies that allows students to seize the initiative for learning themselves, think and act creatively, and to assess, reflect on and improve their own and other's work.
- Students know how well they are doing and their parents or carers receive regular feedback and consultation opportunities about their progress and attainment. However, the department does not make explicit how their performance relates to national benchmarks or age-related expectations.

#### Features of best practice

- Lessons consistently focus on acquiring new knowledge, practising and refining existing skills and/or consolidating students' understanding of PE.

#### Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is outstanding.

- Students benefit from a broad and balanced curriculum, which provides excellent continuity and progression in their learning. As well as extensive core provision, which takes account of the demands of the new PE National Curriculum, they benefit from a wide range of enrichment activities. They

are exposed to memorable experiences, such as the Year 9 football tour to Italy, Bollywood dancing and whole-school community PE days. They also enjoy leadership, competitive sport and leisure-based options.

- PE is inclusive and activities, such as cheerleading and mountain biking, have attracted the participation of formerly disinterested students. Strong links with the local sports partnership, Sunderland College and community groups are also fruitful and enrich the curriculum further.
- PE facilities, including an on-site swimming pool, support curriculum delivery well.

#### Features of best practice

- Students select pathways of learning including traditionally academic, leadership, games and work-related learning strands. Importantly, they gain a range of accreditation to accompany their enhanced knowledge, understanding and skills, which support their next step to either work and/or further study.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding overall.

- The leadership team is ambitious, pro-active and reflective. Careful and strategic planning, implementation and refinement of practice have led to high-quality provision, which is clearly generating excellent academic and social outcomes for students. Their good rapport allows them to work together very effectively, making best use of their complementary skills.
- The impact of the specialism cannot be overstated. Aspects of best practice in PE are shared across the school and it enjoys a very high profile.
- Self-evaluation is accurate. Improvement planning is meticulous and very well informed, drawing on the latest developments in the PE sector.
- Capacity for sustained improvement is good, given the department's strong track record of raising the quality of provision and outcomes for students.

#### Features of best practice

- Rigorous assessment, target-setting, monitoring and intervention facilitate high attainment and accelerated progress among students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- ensuring more students reach the highest levels and grades
- informing parents and carers how their children's performance relates to national benchmarks and/or age-related expectations.

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

John Young  
Her Majesty's Inspector