

Aviation House  
125 Kingsway  
London  
WC2B 6SE

T 0300 123 1231  
F 020 7421 6855  
[enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk](mailto:enquiries@ofsted.gov.uk)  
[www.ofsted.gov.uk](http://www.ofsted.gov.uk)



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Mr H Robinson  
Headteacher  
Gosforth High School  
Knightsbridge  
Great North Road  
Gosforth  
NE3 2JH

Dear Mr Robinson

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 25 and 26 March 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 nine lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is satisfactory.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- The majority of students in all age groups make satisfactory progress and attain broadly average standards in core PE. Attainment in examination PE has declined in recent years and is currently below average. In response to this, BTEC Sports awards are being introduced in Key Stage 4 and the sixth form.
- More able and talented students excel in out-of-school-hours sport, partly as a result of the school's strong links to community clubs and access to

high quality coaching. As a consequence, school teams achieve a high level of success in regional and national competition, for example, in rugby and squash.

- Students make steady progress in the single year of Key Stage 3 they have at the school. However, they do not develop sufficient depth of knowledge to prepare them for examination PE. Their progress in developing and applying skills is stronger than their knowledge of physical and mental capacity or understanding of strategies and tactics. Roles, such as officiating and coaching, are not explicitly developed in the curriculum.
- Students show interest and enthusiasm in their work, try hard and are committed to improve. They behave well, cooperate well with each other in a variety of contexts and forge good relationships with staff. Students readily complete tasks when directed by the teacher. However, they lack the depth of knowledge and understanding to improve the quality of their work when working independently.

### Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is satisfactory.

- Teachers demonstrate secure subject knowledge. This enables them to give clear explanations and demonstrations and to provide supportive and informative feedback which helps students to take the next steps in their learning. Students show due regard for safety and are able to manage their own risk, for example, when working in the school's fitness gym.
- Teachers create a welcoming atmosphere in which students feel safe. Lessons are well organised and structured to allow students to develop their skills, usually by practising a range of progressive drills and then applying them in games situations. In the best lessons, tasks were varied and challenging, with clear learning outcomes, building on prior learning and structured so that students could focus on applying their new skills.
- Teachers effectively question students on their skill development, though their expectations of students' knowledge and understanding of concepts are lower. Where teaching was less effective there were missed opportunities to extend and challenge students, particularly in examination theory lessons. Lessons were predominantly led by the teacher, with few opportunities for students to work independently.

### Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is satisfactory.

- The core curriculum is broad and balanced and meets National Curriculum requirements. Implementation of the new National Curriculum has been slow, partly as a result of the temporary loss of indoor facilities. The recent completion of phase one of the new facility developments has allowed the department to provide a more engaging curriculum with a strong emphasis on promoting healthy and active lifestyles.

- Students do not yet receive their full entitlement to two-hours of PE each week. The school is tackling this shortfall through a number of initiatives. For example, full-time coaching assistants run break and lunch-time activities and the timetable is collapsed for the whole of Key Stage 3 and Key Stage 4 during two weeks each year to offer an extensive range of inspirational enrichment activities, such as sports tours, skiing trips and coaching clinics.
- GCSE and A-level PE courses are well established. However, students are critical of the core Key Stage 4 programme. They say they enjoy the physical activity and release from the classroom but consider the programme recreational and not sufficiently challenging to develop further their knowledge, skills and understanding. However, recent student consultation has brought about positive curriculum changes which have begun to reduce disengagement, especially among girls.
- To provide a more tailored programme for the full range of students, vocational courses are being introduced in both Key Stage 4 and the sixth form. There is currently no curriculum provision in the sixth form. The majority of sixth form students, however, take full advantage of the free leisure centre membership provided by the school.
- The school has a strong tradition of competitive school sport and the range of non-competitive clubs is increasing. A large proportion of students engage in clubs, both before and after school.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is satisfactory.

- The senior leadership team has a clear and ambitious vision for PE, sport and health. These have a high profile in the school and the community. New facilities, featuring a state-of-the-art integrated sports complex, are being developed through the Building Schools for The Future programme, which will enable the school to realise its vision.
- After a period of departmental instability and loss of facilities, staff morale is being lifted. The subject leader is aware of some of the strengths and areas for improvement. This is reflected in a detailed development plan. The school has raised expectations as it enters into a new and exciting era and leaders at all levels are ready for the challenge.
- Monitoring of lessons and regular reviews are largely accurate. Assessment information is being used to set challenging targets in examination PE, though not in the core. Departmental documentation is in place and new schemes of work are being developed, in line with revised National Curriculum requirements. The school has taken steps to secure high quality teaching in the classroom and is now beginning to tailor professional development to raise staff awareness of recent subject developments. The subject leader heads a strong team and there is good capacity to improve.

## Features of best practice

- The school provides sixth-form provision for the Newcastle Falcons Rugby Club Academy players, some of whom study A-level PE. This has had a significant impact on raising the standard of rugby in the school, not just at sixth form level. In addition, teams are now having considerable success at regional and national level.
- The scheme enables the school to employ a professional rugby coach, which has improved the quality of rugby teaching and coaching of other members of the department. Academy students are highly motivated, accomplished and ambitious athletes, with advanced knowledge of their sport who are excellent role-models for younger students.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- broadening the teaching styles so that students develop deeper knowledge and understanding while maintaining high standards of physical performance
- providing a personalised curriculum in which students can progress in a range of roles
- increasing the number of students experiencing the Government's expectation of two hours of high quality PE and sport per week
- improving the quality of long- and short-term planning; defining and using clear learning outcomes which help students to gain a clear understanding of their learning

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

Geoff Sheldon  
Additional Inspector