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Mr A Gilhooley
Headteacher
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Dear Mr Gilhooley

Ofsted 2010-11 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 21 and 22 April 2010 to look at work in PE.

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 seven lessons and many of the extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good.

- Students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 3 has been rising over recent years and is currently above average. However, relatively few students reach the higher Level 6 and above. When the whole range of accredited courses is considered, students' attainment at the end of Key Stage 4 is above average.
- In Key Stages 3 and 4, most students make good progress because of consistently good-quality teaching. However, some of the more able students do not make the progress they could. The most vulnerable students make good progress because they receive targeted support and are often supported well by teaching assistants.
- Students are given many opportunities to develop personally and socially. In all the lessons observed, students thoroughly enjoyed the activities.

Their attitudes and behaviour are outstanding. Students are exceptionally polite and well mannered. They say that the work as sports leaders and in assessing each other's performance in PE lessons has improved their confidence, enhanced their social skills and helped them develop their ability to communicate effectively with others.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- Teaching is consistently good. All staff have good subject knowledge and use this, together with assessment information, to ensure that students of average and below average attainment are challenged well. However, in some lessons, the learning is not sufficiently matched to the needs of some of the more able students.
- In all the lessons observed, students had many opportunities to work independently, collaborate as part of a group and make decisions for themselves. Students have many very good opportunities to evaluate their own achievement and that of their peers.
- Relationships between staff and students and also between students are outstanding. Consequently, there is a strong ethos of respect and courtesy which helps to promote a purposeful learning environment.
- Teachers' ongoing assessment of students during lessons is good. They respond well to students' individual needs as the lesson progresses. The continuous monitoring of the work of BTEC students is a strength. Students say that they receive clear personalised guidelines on how to improve their work and are constantly reminded of coursework deadlines.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is good.

- All students experience a minimum of two hours good-quality PE each week, with Key Stage 4 students receiving more in keeping with the type of accredited course they follow. All students in Key Stages 3 and 4 experience programmes which help to develop their leadership skills exceptionally well.
- The curriculum provides a broad range of activities and students in Key Stage 4 follow individual pathways of study. Many of the lessons observed promoted creativity well.
- The school provides an excellent range of extra-curricular activities which appeals to students of all abilities and interests. The school's information shows a very high take-up of these opportunities.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is good.

- Leaders are committed to improving the life-chances of all students through PE and are very enthusiastic to improve all aspects of the department.
- Procedures for collating information on students' attainment and progress are detailed and systematic. However, the data and other self-evaluation information are not analysed carefully enough to explain the variation between the achievement of the more able students on GCSE and BTEC courses and the relative underachievement of the more able students by the end of Key Stage 3. Consequently, plans for improvement are not focused sharply enough on the areas which will have the greatest impact in raising students' achievement further.
- The school's sports partnership programmes and the specialist sports status play a significant role in extending opportunities for students in this school and in local schools.
- The school's reputation for providing skilled and enthusiastic sporting young people is well recognised in the local community.
- Resources for PE are excellent and are used exceptionally well by the school to promote sport in the local community.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- increasing the proportion of students who attain the higher levels in PE to above average by:
 - ensuring that teachers, in all lessons, plan activities that are sharply focused on the needs of the more able students
 - analysing the data and other self-evaluation information more carefully to explain the variation between the achievement of the more able students in GCSE and BTEC, and the relative underachievement of the more able students by the end of Key Stage 3
 - ensuring that plans are put into place to eradicate any relative underperformance of the more able students in PE.

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 under the URN for your school. It will also be available to the team for your next institutional inspection.

Yours sincerely

Roy Bowers
Her Majesty's Inspector