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Mr C Markham  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mr Markham

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 25 and 26 May 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 nine lessons and extra-curricular activities.

The overall effectiveness of PE is good with outstanding features.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good.

- Students attain above average standards and make good progress overall by the end of Key Stage 3. This is also reflected in core Key Stage 4 where students maintain these standards and rate of progress. Students have good understanding of leading healthy active lifestyles because of the emphasis placed on this during lessons and effective links with food technology and PSHEE programmes.
- GCSE results have been significantly above average in grades A\* to C for the last three years with the department employing a number of very successful strategies to help students predicted D grades to attain a C. The proportion attaining the higher A\* to A grades is low and leaders acknowledge there has been some underachievement on sixth-form courses. Positive actions have been taken to tackle these issues, including

broadening the range of examination courses offered to better meet students' needs.

- Students have good opportunities to take different roles in lessons and listen with respect to each other's input and suggestions for improvements. They have good opportunities to feedback on provision at different times of the year. A number of older students work with younger ones in the school or with primary pupils and a small number gain leadership qualifications each year.
- The majority of students display positive attitudes towards the subject, although a very small minority say work is too easy and they are not challenged enough. Behaviour and participation rates are generally good in lessons and extra-curricular activities.

### Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is good.

- All staff have good subject knowledge and use it well to engage and motivate students through effective feedback and interventions to improve. They are skilled at using question and answer sessions. Where this is particularly effective, staff use extended questioning to challenge students' thinking and elicit more in-depth responses. The use of different tasks to ensure all students are continuously challenged to attain their best is inconsistent across the department. The pace of lessons is swift, as is the transition between activities, although time is lost when students take too long to change and lessons do not start promptly. Good attention is given in all lessons to safety, especially when using throwing implements in athletics.
- Excellent relationships exist in all lessons between staff and students who consistently say that PE staff are friendly, approachable and encouraging. The PE technician provides excellent support to staff and students. He is skilled at observation and giving feedback to students to help them improve.
- Procedures to assess, monitor and analyse students' progress are comprehensive, leading to swift intervention with any identified as underachieving. Equally, procedures to moderate teachers' judgements across the department and the borough are thorough. Students know their National Curriculum levels of attainment, although this understanding is not used consistently in lessons to motivate them further. Marking of examination coursework includes very helpful comments on strengths and how to improve further.

### Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is good.

- The curriculum is dominated by games. Although this meets the needs and interests of the students, the department has rightly explored and introduced other activities to broaden their experiences further, including

outdoor and adventurous activities, fitness and weight training. Students in core Key Stage 4 lessons have a good choice of activities. Good links are emerging with other subjects, such as food technology, and the department actively seeks to extend literacy skills through the use of PE terminology and in displays. Sixth-form students are helped to understand links between their PE and Biology courses, particularly when studying respiratory and circulatory systems.

- The curriculum in Key Stage 3 meets the Government's expectation for two hours of PE each week. However, students in Key Stage 4 who only access core PE have one hour each week. High numbers attend extra-curricular activities and participate in inter-form competitions. However, the department does not monitor the exact number of Key Stage 4 students who receive the expected three hours of PE and sport each week.
- The extra-curricular and enrichment programmes are extensive with a broad range of games, 'Step into Dance' and outdoor activities. Students have excellent opportunities to participate in competitive and non-competitive activities and to work with a large number of external specialist coaches and/or professional athletes to extend their skills. Students identified as gifted and talented in PE are specifically targeted to receive additional coaching from external specialists. They were particularly enthusiastic about coaching sessions in rugby, football, basketball and table tennis as well as the inter-form competitions programme. Enrichment includes good opportunities to learn games from around the world and visit international sporting events, such as Wimbledon and Lord's.
- The department has initiated a football academy that has been set up in conjunction with the Football Association and sixth-form leaders. Students study four A-level courses, receive expert football coaching and gain qualifications in this area of work.

#### Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- Leaders have a thorough understanding of the subject's strengths and priorities for development because of a highly effective and thorough programme of monitoring and evaluation. Activities include a full range of lesson observations, work scrutiny, student feedback and data analysis, as well as a regular department review. Outcomes are used to produce a comprehensive development plan that is clearly focused on raising standards further and bringing about even greater consistency in the quality of teaching.
- Although there have been significant changes in staffing this year, the head of department has created an excellent team with a common purpose and direction. He uses colleagues' strengths extremely well and all have high expectations and ambition for further department improvements.

- The displays in and around the PE area are stimulating reflections of the department's work. They include celebrations of students' achievements and national honours, examination expectations, extensive information on National Curriculum levels of attainment and next steps in learning and a code of conduct for matches. A very broad range of links with local sports clubs is advertised.
- Specialist technology status has had a positive impact on PE through the work to develop students' healthy, active lifestyles. Training status has a prominent role in the support and development of newly qualified teachers in the department.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- monitoring and, where necessary, increasing the number of students in Key Stage 4 who receive the expected three hours of PE and school sport each week
- increasing the range of different tasks in lessons to ensure all students are challenged consistently.

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

Judith Rundle  
Her Majesty's Inspector