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Mrs I Bryce  
Headteacher  
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Dear Mrs Bryce

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 16 and 17 June 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 without their consent.

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 other physical activities during the theme day.

The overall effectiveness of PE is outstanding.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is good with outstanding personal development.

- Attainment has been above average in all age groups and examination courses over the last three years, though the school acknowledges that not enough students have achieved A\* or A grades at GCSE. Students are currently on target to exceed last year's GCSE and A-level results. School teams and individual students achieve sporting success. For example, both boys and girls have been given contracts to play for professional football clubs.
- Progress is good overall with outstanding development of students' personal thinking and learning skills. Students have a good and rapidly developing understanding of using and adapting tactics to different

situations as a result of the emphasis on this in lessons. The vast majority of students show determination and perseverance to improve.

- Students of all ages demonstrate strong leadership skills in lessons. In Key Stage 4 and the sixth form, the development of leadership skills is a strength of the department's work. Students cooperate and work together extremely well in small groups to observe, evaluate and make suggestions on how to improve each other's work.
- Students interviewed were passionate about the subject and the opportunities provided for them to excel. All students are helped to achieve their best at all times. As a result, they become confident and competent performers who are willing to take risks in trying new activities and finding different solutions and ways of working. As one student said, 'the teachers have belief in you'.

### Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is outstanding.

- Staff know individual students extremely well and do everything possible to meet their needs and aspirations. Teaching inspires students to want to be the best they can. A strength of the department's work is the differentiation of tasks and resources provided in lessons to meet the full range of ability levels. Students identified as gifted and talented are challenged through taking different roles, including leading and initiating sessions and peer coaching. Teachers skilfully provide less able students with activities that are broken down into smaller tasks to help them to acquire skills at a good pace. Students with special educational needs and/or disabilities are given extensive individual support that enables them to successfully complete GCSE requirements. Very occasionally, not enough time is given to consolidate skills fully.
- All staff use their subject knowledge very well to extend students' knowledge and understanding and to improve the quality of their performances. Teachers are highly competent at using question and answer sessions to help students develop more in-depth responses that strengthen their understanding and knowledge.
- The use of assessment for learning strategies and progress data is a strength of provision. Marking in coursework and feedback in all lessons include good recognition of strengths and comprehensive information on the next steps in learning. All students know how well they are doing and what they need to do to improve because of the quality and depth of feedback and reports in the progress monitoring system. Good procedures are in place to moderate judgements across the department. The head of department undertakes detailed analysis of assessment data and uses this to hold staff to account for the progress of their students.
- Outstanding relationships exist between students and staff. Students praise staff highly and appreciate the time and commitment they give to them.

## Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is good with outstanding aspects.

- The curriculum is broad, balanced and well informed by current good practice in PE. The range of activities meets the needs of students across all age groups very well. The Key Stage 3 curriculum has been adapted very effectively to meet the requirements of the new PE National Curriculum and is motivating students to learn.
- All students in Key Stage 3 meet the Government expectation for two hours of curriculum PE and high numbers participate in extra-curricular activities. Students in Key Stage 4, who do not take PE at GCSE, only have one hour of core PE each week. Although the take-up of extra-curricular activities is reasonably high, a minority of students in Key Stage 4 do not meet the Government expectation for three hours of PE and school sport each week. Leaders and the school sports coordinator are rightly exploring ways to increase participation rates further. Sixth-form students have good opportunities to participate in a games afternoon and to use facilities at other times in the week.
- The extra-curricular and enrichment programmes are extensive and have been broadened even further to engage more students through school sports partnership initiatives. The department is very responsive to students' suggestions for additional activities to ensure higher participation rates. As a result, it has provided rowing, boxing and surfing clubs which are very popular. The theme day enabled boys and girls to make exceptional progress in their creative work, communication and teamwork through cheerleading activities.
- The extent of intervention activities to meet the range of students' needs is exceptional. Excellent opportunities are in place for students to raise their self-esteem, confidence, behaviour and communication through an activity programme linked to the armed services and extreme sailing, as well as extensive revision packages and individual guidance for students on GCSE and A-level courses.
- Extensive links have been created with local sports clubs to extend students' opportunities further and to ensure they have routes into lifelong participation in physical activity and sport. Staff have been tenacious in targeting students to become involved in specific sports that have helped them overcome school refusal, reluctance to participate and medical issues.

## Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is outstanding.

- The head of department is an excellent role-model for teaching and inspires both staff and students to be ambitious and to attain their best. Through his support and tenacity, he ensures this happens across the department. He is unafraid to tackle difficult issues to improve opportunities for students. Staff at all levels in the department are well

informed of current initiatives and use these to continuously improve provision and students' outcomes.

- An extremely thorough and comprehensive monitoring and evaluation process enables leaders to have an accurate view of the strengths and weaknesses of the department. These are presented in a full departmental self-evaluation document and a comprehensive action plan. However, judgements do not always celebrate strengths of the department's work, including achievements over time.
- The programme of professional development is effective in improving subject knowledge and teaching methods. Sharing of good practice through peer observations and a peer-coaching programme has helped to achieve consistency in high-quality teaching.
- PE has a high profile in the school. The impact of specialist status and the school sports partnership is significant for PE. For example, it has increased the use of technology in lessons, increased extra-curricular provision and introduced an academy for gifted and talented athletes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- exploring ways to increase the number of students who meet the Government expectation for three hours of PE and school sport each week.

I hope that 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