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Mr Sorrell
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Dear Mr Sorrell

Ofsted survey inspection programme – Physical Education

Thank you for your hospitality and co-operation, and that of your staff, during my visit on Wednesday 03 and Thursday 04 October to look at work in Physical Education (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 continuity of learning between key stages.

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. All feedback letters will be published on the Ofsted website at the end of each half-term.

The evidence used to inform the judgements made included: interviews with staff and learners, scrutiny of relevant documentation, analysis of students' work and observation of seven lessons, together with enrichment activities after school.

The overall effectiveness of physical education was judged to be outstanding

Achievement and standards

Achievement and standards are outstanding.

- At the end of each key stage a very high proportion of students achieve standards above the national average. Progress is excellent, because at the time of entry standards are broadly in line with the national expectation.
- Results in GCSE fluctuate a little but overall show a rising trend since designation as a specialist sports college. In each of the past three years GCSE results were above and usually well above average when

compared to those achieved nationally, in the local authority and sports colleges in similar circumstances. The number of students achieving A*-C grades in 2007 was very high and those obtaining the higher A*-A grades also increased. Students taking the BTEC course for the first time achieved a one hundred percent pass rate.

- Careful tracking of individual performance, effective teaching and the commitment by a high percentage of students to an extensive range of enhancement activities all contribute to high standards and overall achievement.
- A large number of students in each key stage develop very effective leadership skills. The students say that commitment to the leadership programme in and beyond lessons has helped to build confidence and improve their performance.
- The ability to analyse performance, give appropriate feedback and to plan work are clear strengths in all activity areas. Knowledge and understanding of the subject are slightly higher than skill performance, although the practical activity seen in dance was outstanding.
- The personal development of students is outstanding. They work hard, persevere with tasks and take responsibility when it is given. Levels of participation in and beyond the curriculum are high. There is a culture of mutual respect between staff and students. Contributions the students themselves make helps build high self-esteem and this in turn creates the industrious atmosphere that permeates the department.

Quality of teaching and learning of subject/aspect

The quality of teaching and learning is good.

- Excellent use is made of the expertise of teachers and outside coaches to spread good practice. In the lessons seen students were almost always immersed in their work and enjoying what they were doing.
- Teachers have good subject knowledge and use a range of styles to engage and sustain interest. Lessons are conducted at a good pace but sometimes the 'double period' lessons took too long to get underway.
- Learning objectives are shared with the students, revisited during the lessons and again at the end in effective plenaries. However, the use of objectives is inconsistent. Sometimes they are too broad to give a focus for the work and sometimes they describe what the class will do, rather than the intended learning.
- The integration of leadership opportunities throughout the curriculum greatly enhances the quality of learning and makes a significant contribution to personal and social development. In some cases the success of this work can be tracked to the economic well-being of students working in the local community.
- There is a good balance struck between teaching the different knowledge and skill components of the national curriculum and 14+ qualifications. Students are informed what they must do to achieve the higher levels and planning sets them challenging but realistic targets.
- Students with learning difficulties and/or disabilities are given good support but in general assessment is not being used to plan lessons that include different tasks suited to the wide ability range.

Quality of the curriculum

The quality of the curriculum is outstanding.

- The school provides an excellent curriculum for all its students and the great majority receive up to 150 minutes curriculum time each week. The 'double' lesson adds to the quality of learning because it gives time for students to contribute and test out their own ideas, to build progressions and repeat practices where necessary.
- The integration into the curriculum at both key stages of progressive leadership tasks is exemplary practice.
- A high proportion of students take part in an extensive range of enrichment opportunities that provide both competitive and non-competitive opportunities beyond the normal school day. The range of clubs offered in the various forms of dance is exceptional. Additional provision for cheerleading and rhythmic gymnastics provides an innovative link between dance and the more traditional activities in PE.
- A pilot project introduced in Year 9 acknowledges the way the department consults and acts on the views of students. This pilot pre-empted changes under the new National Curriculum programme of study and shows the greater attention being given to personalised learning.

Leadership and management of subject

The quality of leadership and management is outstanding.

- The headteacher and senior managers place great value on physical education. This is reflected in practices within the department and across the whole school.
- The Director of Sport and Head of Department provide excellent vision. This vision is translated into effective policies and plans that are delivered by a highly motivated, hard working and committed team.
- Everyone has a clearly defined role and is held to account for delivery of their part of the programme.
- Self-evaluation is outstanding. Internal systems for observing lessons, analysis of results and departmental reviews all contribute to the self-critical culture which is leading to year-on-year improvement. The effective use of these 'tools' allow for early intervention where performance might otherwise not be so good. There is no sense of complacency.

Continuity between key stages

- Additional funding to promote work with partner primary schools has made an impressive contribution to standards in PE and sport at the time of transfer from Key Stage 2 to Key Stage 3. The drive and enthusiasm of the link officer has led to a significant increase in students' levels of participation, motivation and achievement.
- A recent survey reflects the need to moderate end of Key Stage 2 assessment judgements if they are to be used reliably as a baseline for

measuring progress. The good work now in progress addresses this weakness and will avoid the need for re-testing in Year 7.

- A series of additional activities have broadened primary school provision in and beyond the curriculum. The focus has moved towards improving the quality of teaching and learning in lessons including meeting the needs of Key Stage 1 pupils.
- The leadership skills introduced in primary schools are being successfully extended within the secondary curriculum. The leadership programme builds across each key stage towards accreditation for a very high percentage of students. High quality inter-active teaching and learning seen in lessons is often a consequence of this innovative scheme.
- The variety of 'pathways' created for participation at Key Stage 4 are a consequence of a curriculum that gradually evolves across Key Stage 3. However, the lack of opportunity for boys to take dance in Year 9 disrupts continuity in this activity making it more difficult for them to follow the GCSE option.

Inclusion

- Careful tracking and analysis of data allows almost all students to make excellent progress. The curricular and enrichment programmes have been provided after full consultation with the students themselves and they appreciate the range of opportunities available to them.
- Teaching in some lessons fails to provide for the differing learning needs of groups and individuals. In the present Year 9 'pilot' curriculum, girls are given access to a wider range of activities than the boys.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, included:

- ensuring the planning of lessons
 - makes use of assessment to provide tasks suitably matched to different ability groups
 - consistently identifies learning objectives with a clear learning focus
- reviewing Key Stage 3 provision to ensure equality of access and entitlement for students to all activity areas
- Improving the standard of changing accommodation.

I hope these observations are useful as you continue to develop physical education 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

I Howard Todd
Additional Inspector