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Mrs B Green
Principal
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Dear Mrs Green

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 18 and 19 January 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 senior leaders, the subject leader, and three groups of students from both key stages; scrutiny of relevant documentation; analysis of students' work; and observation of eight lessons.

The overall effectiveness of PE is satisfactory.

Achievement in PE

Achievement in PE is satisfactory.

- Standards by the end of Year 9 are below average. However, based on their starting points the majority of students make good progress mainly because they enjoy PE, behave well and try hard to improve their performance. Year 7 students worked well in pairs to create basic gymnastic sequences and in an outdoor and adventurous activities lesson, and Year 8 students knew what strategies to adopt to quickly complete simple problem-solving tasks.

- In Key Stage 4, observations of core PE lessons confirmed that standards are broadly average. The department is unable to illustrate students' progress because accurate records are not regularly maintained. An increasing number of students choose to study the BTEC First Diploma in Sport and in the last two years, over 90% of them have attained the equivalent of two A* to C grades in this award. This performance is not replicated in GCSE classes where results are consistently well below the national average.
- A permanent, specialist coach employed by the school is having a significant impact on improving the quality of teaching and on raising standards in badminton. Increasing numbers of students participate in after-school badminton and a small proportion of them have represented the school in local and regional competitions.

Quality of teaching in PE

The quality of teaching in PE is satisfactory.

- Most teaching is organised well; staff use their specialist subject knowledge to plan lessons that stimulate students' interest and generate high participation rates. Students are given time to practise new skills and are encouraged to evaluate how well they and others are doing which aids their overall progress. Revised assessment procedures in Key Stage 3 provide teachers with a better understanding of students' starting points and show the progress they make at regular intervals, but these procedures do not yet extend fully into Key Stage 4.
- Sports leadership is taught well and this has a significant impact on increasing girls' participation rates. They develop the confidence and competence to lead sports activities for each other and a small group of them are encouraged to join the school's leadership academy to help to run community sports events. Good teaching in BTEC lessons is having a direct impact on students' achievement but this is not the case in GCSE PE. There is no coherent scheme of work to plan theory lessons, monitoring of students' progress lacks rigour and some teaching fails to capture students' interest.

Quality of the curriculum in PE

The quality of the PE curriculum is satisfactory.

- Students enjoy three hours of PE each week in both key stages. In Years 7 to 9 they experience a wide range of activities, including swimming lessons in Year 7, and a significant proportion engage in and enjoy after-school sport.
- Specialist status has helped to expand curricular opportunities for students to pursue a healthy lifestyle and to achieve an accredited award in PE and sport in Key Stage 4. Provision is increasingly matched to the needs and interests of students but more time is required to ensure these new

developments become firmly established and begin to impact fully on outcomes for all students.

Effectiveness of leadership and management in PE

The effectiveness of leadership and management in PE is good.

- The subject leader has led and managed a period of significant change in recent years and has shown that he has the knowledge, skills and understanding to make further improvements. There is a shared ambition within the department to raise standards and ensure that all students achieve their very best. He and the director of specialism share a good understanding of the department's strengths and weaknesses. However, at times some of their evaluations are too generous.
- Recently updated schemes of work and revised assessment procedures provide a good basis for increasing the proportion of students meeting national expectations. The department acknowledges that the detailed monitoring of students' progress in BTEC sport groups is not matched in GCSE classes.

Areas for improvement, which we discussed, include:

- improving the quality of teaching and learning by:
 - ensuring that the revised planning and assessment procedures recently introduced into Key Stage 3 become firmly embedded in all teaching
- raising achievement in GCSE PE by:
 - providing a detailed scheme of work for planning GCSE theory lessons
 - adding greater rigour to the monitoring of teaching and the progress students make in these lessons.

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

John Mitcheson
Her Majesty's Inspector