

Stand to attention... it's inspection



CAUTION !!

**Inspections may
occur suddenly
and without
warning**

Ofsted

Crispin Andrews talks to Carole Raymond, Specialist Advisor for PE at Ofsted, about the changes to the inspection process and the impact on school sport and PE...

What could be worse? Its Monday morning and the weekend – never long enough anyway – is over. The Friday finishing line? Not even in sight.

And then it happens. At the weekly briefing.

In walks Mr Drabb, the headteacher. Even greyer than usual, it seems as if the cares of the world – let alone the school – are on his shoulders. And then someone spots it. In his hand. The big brown envelope.

Run away. A multitude of horned demons gathering in the depths of Hades and ready to march upon the school at a moment's notice. Run to the Hills. Glib smiles

mention of the word? Are PE departments, coordinators and school sport partnerships right to equate a visit from the dreaded HMIs, or the even more dreaded Section 10, as something akin to convincing Genghis Khan of the need for good table manners or explaining to a group of Jehovah's witnesses that seven o'clock on a Sunday morning really isn't the best time to go around banging on people's doors?

Carole Raymond, Specialist Advisor for PE at Ofsted, is keen to allay fears about the inspection process. She feels that where a school gives a high profile to PE and sport, works proactively with other schools and its local

areas of weakness can be developed in the future so that more students are engaged and a wider range of potential realised."

Proposals are afoot to phase out Ofsted's old inspection framework. From September 2005 PE and sport might no longer be a relatively small part of a whole school inspection process. Should the new proposals be accepted, in its place will be shorter whole school and separate subject specific inspections. Others based around specific themes will also be carried out on behalf of the DfES as the government seeks to ascertain the effectiveness of PESSCL and various other strategies on the ground. These inspections, although short and sharp, will be conducted with little notice – two weeks.

Despite the structural changes, what inspectors will be looking for from a school hasn't really changed. All the usual suspects are still there. Standards of achievement, progress, attitudes of pupils, effectiveness of teaching and learning, the extent to which the curriculum meets pupil needs, partnerships beyond the school as well as the leadership and management of the subject. Evidence relating to specific issues, such as provision for SEN and gifted and talented pupils or the impact of the new CPD programme on standards, may also be requested while in order to justify their additional expenditure, Sports Colleges will be expected to

demonstrate the whole school impact of their specialism.

For School Sports Partnerships, levels of participation in two hours of high quality PE and sport are uppermost in Ofsted's mind with SSP's needing to show how they are moving towards the achievement of their PSA targets. However, partnerships will no longer be able to select their preferred primary schools for inspection. Carole Raymond explained why this would now be done at random.

"Variations between the quantity and quality of what schools within a partnership are offering is inevitable," she said. "We want to see the whole picture. What is at the back of the shop as well as what is in the shop window."

Shorter inspections mean less emphasis on lesson observation and a greater role for self-evaluation. A document produced by the school and outlining the current position and progress made in all of the above-mentioned areas will form the basis of the inspectors' analysis. The inspectors' job will be to simply match supporting evidence against standards. So, for instance, if a school says its standards of teaching are high, an inspector may want to view some of this teaching. If claims are made that levels of academic attainment have improved or specific provision for gifted and talented students is in place the school will need to

"We are not trying to trick schools or embarrass them by just focusing on what they are doing wrong."

and condescending airs at the ready, the diabolical minions brandish clipboards and browse the Big Black Book of Beguilement one last time – eager to find that one snippet with which they might trip up an unsuspecting teacher. There can be no escape. For in two weeks time the end of the world – well at least the school – is nigh. In two weeks time Ofsted will be here.

But should schools go into panic mode at the mere

community and invests in a high quality learning experience both within and beyond the curriculum, it should expect nothing but a glowing report.

"We are not trying to trick schools or embarrass them by just focusing on what they are doing wrong," she said. "It's all about evaluating pupils' standards and achievement and the quality of provision and delivery; identifying strengths and looking at how

provide the evidence to substantiate these claims. Yet as Carole Raymond explains, this does not entail a mass of additional paperwork.

"Development plans, subject reviews, sports college or partnership reports are already in place," she said. "These documents are more than adequate for inspection purposes. The inspection framework is itself a useful resource as it also tells you exactly what to expect during an inspection."

Indeed, a new government document entitled *'Do you have high quality PE and sport in your school'* has just been published. Its expressed aim is to help schools use the pupil outcomes contained in the original 'High Quality' document to carry out a self-evaluation through which the quality of what pupils do can

be further enhanced.

Yet although the 'Big Brown Envelope' may no longer strike terror into the hearts of teachers and visions of devilish minions, Mongolian barbarians and 'Preaching Pete's dawn sermon' may no longer be conjured up at the mere sight of it, concerns and uncertainties about Ofsted inspections do remain.

What happens if the sports hall and gym are being used for exams and then it pours with rain for two days? While being observed should we be innovative to engage more pupils or go for safety first and stick with the tried and trusted methods of the past? What about outside coaches – should we be using them when Ofsted come in? It is Carole Raymond's view that if there is a whole-school

strategy whereby facilities, appropriate teaching methods and AOTTs are used in a specific, designated way to enhance students' educational experience and to raise standards, none of the above situations should cause undue concern.

"A school that is delivering high quality PE and sport will know in advance when facilities are out of use for exams and plan appropriate outside activities, including wet weather alternatives," she said. "Good teachers will be creative enough to adapt a lesson to suit adverse weather conditions or to change track if initial lesson targets are not being met. They will also support or manage coaches so that students gain maximum benefit from any collaboration.

"What we would be

concerned about though," she continues, "is if a teacher doesn't realise that their lesson isn't working. Or if school management are unconcerned with or even unaware of the work its PE department is doing or its role within a school sport partnership."

So for the PE department that grinds to a halt during exams or the primary school teacher to whom coach means a cup of tea and marking, Ofsted will continue to be the stuff of sleepless nights. Yet for the school who takes ownership of its potential and delivers to the best of its capacity, the Big Brown Envelope need hold no terrors. Indeed it is an opportunity to demonstrate, profile – even trumpet achievement – for all to hear.
