## Curriculum Evaluation

### Physical Education

**REPORT**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Mhuire</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Newtown</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ballinasloe</td>
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<td>County Roscommon</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>15531P</td>
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Date of inspection: 22-02-2018
WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the Primary School Curriculum (1999). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Physical Education under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils’ learning
2. Supporting pupils’ learning through learner experiences and teachers’ practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils’ learning

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school’s provision in each area. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection: 22-02-2018

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>• Pupil focus-group interview</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Mhuire, Newtown, is a rural, co-educational school catering for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. It is situated outside the town of Ballinasloe and is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clonfert. The teaching staff consists of four mainstream class teachers and two support teachers. At the time of the evaluation, there were eighty-four pupils enrolled.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall quality of learning in Physical Education (PE) is good, although there is a need to further develop learning across certain strands of the curriculum.
• The learning experiences provided to pupils are commendable and the lessons observed were characterised by respectful interactions and meaningful activities for learning.
• The overall quality of teaching in PE is good, with very good elements of practice observed.
• The time allocated to tuition by external coaches for some strands of the curriculum is excessive, as it does not provide for a broad and balanced programme of work to be implemented.
• Assessment strategies in use are effective, and progress is recorded to a good standard using checklists.
• The overall quality of school planning is good, and while very good guidance for teaching and learning is provided in the whole-school plan in principle, the extent to which it is implemented across all strands of the curriculum is limited.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Class teachers should ensure that they plan for and implement a broad and balanced curriculum, with particular emphasis on developing instruction in gymnastics, dance and outdoor and adventure activities across the school; where necessary, professional development should be availed of to support this instruction.
• The provision of instruction by external coaches should be reviewed to ensure that the school provides pupils with appropriate time to develop all strands of PE in line with the requirements of the Primary School Curriculum.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in PE is good. The pupils were very engaged throughout the lessons observed and the majority of pupils achieved the learning objectives. Collaborative learning methodologies were used very effectively in most settings. The majority of pupils in the focus group spoke positively about their enjoyment of PE lessons and discussed their learning confidently. There is a strong focus on active and healthy living in the school and movement
breaks are used effectively during transitions between lessons. Recreation-time play is supported by a large selection of high-quality resources. However, analysis of records of previous work shows that pupil learning is predominantly developed in the games strand of the curriculum and, to a lesser extent, the athletics and aquatics strands. In these strands, pupil achievement is of a high quality and teachers note very good progress for most pupils in these areas. Very good opportunities are provided to the pupils to display their learning in games and athletics through competitions and events in the locality. Pupils in the middle and senior classes experience learning opportunities in outdoor and adventure activities on a bi-annual basis off-site. However, there is a need to further develop the plan for this work to ensure consistent skill development.

While instruction in gymnastics and dance has been planned for the current school year, more long-term implementation of this plan is required to ensure pupil learning is developed appropriately in these strands. Consequently, teachers should ensure that all pupils receive a broad and balanced curriculum that enables them to develop their skills and competences across each strand across the school.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The learning experiences provided to pupils in PE are good. The lessons observed were characterised by respectful interactions and meaningful activities for learning. All teachers demonstrate very high-quality classroom management skills and good use is made of both the limited indoor space and the outdoor area during PE lessons. The school provides good-quality learner experiences through the annual school sports day and other local initiatives designed to encourage increased activity levels among pupils. The provision of leadership opportunities to senior class pupils in this regard is very good. Most pupils are suitably challenged by the learner experiences provided.

The overall quality of teachers’ practice is good, with very good elements of practice observed across the school. All teachers prepare long-term and short-term plans. Where planning was most effective, it was based on specific intended learning outcomes for pupils and outlined clear progression in each strand. In a few settings, the teachers shared the learning objectives and success criteria with the pupils to guide their learning. This practice should be extended across the school. Much of the time allocated to PE on weekly timetables is used by external coaches. While some very useful learning opportunities are provided for pupils, the overall curricular programme lacks suitable breadth and balance. The school should review the provision of tuition from external coaches within the overall time allocated to each strand of the PE curriculum to ensure provision is in line with the requirements of the Primary School Curriculum and to maximise opportunities for class teachers to develop their own teaching expertise in a manner that supports learning in these strands into the future.

The overall quality of assessment is good. In each setting, teacher observation is used effectively to ascertain pupil achievement levels. In addition, checklists are used to record progress across a number of areas of the curriculum. To build on this good practice, these records should ensure that all strands of the curriculum are assessed, and the data gathered should be used to provide more focused instruction catering for individual pupils’ needs. Furthermore, self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies should be further developed.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

The overall quality of school planning is good. A very comprehensive whole-school plan has been formulated, and it contains very useful guidance for teachers to support their individual planning and practice. In most cases, the plan was used by teachers to inform the lessons observed.
However, in practice, the potential of these documents has not been maximised as the implementation of the entire plan is somewhat fragmented. The teachers should now review the plan, taking into account all activities and learning opportunities that happen throughout the year, and agree on a calendar of events that supports progression and continuity across the curriculum at all class levels. Upon completion of this review, relevant continuing professional development opportunities should be availed of to ensure that all teachers are equipped with the skills and the confidence to implement the plan, and to reduce reliance on external tutors.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
THE INSPECTORATE’S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate’s quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school’s provision of each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils’ learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a very good standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<tr>
<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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