

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Mary's Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Holy Faith Convent Glasnevin Dublin 11
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60770P

Date of Inspection: 03-05-2017



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. 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. Learning, teaching and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	03-05-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and subject coordinator• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and subject teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Mary's Secondary School, a voluntary secondary school operating under the auspices of the Le Chéile Schools Trust, has a current enrolment of 761 girls. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with notable examples of highly effective practice in some lessons.
- A strong ethos of collaboration and engagement with continuing professional development exists within the physical education (PE) department.
- Teacher observation was used throughout all lessons to support students' learning; there is no formalised method to assess and report on students' practical performance in PE.
- Subject provision is good with the majority of students timetabled for a double period each week; Leaving Certificate students who study both higher level Mathematics and LCVP do not currently have any access to PE.
- A range of whole-school initiatives, including links to external agencies, adds value to the physical education programme.
- Subject planning is well developed with schemes of work based on four-week modules in place; however, the current short duration of each module limits the student experience.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The assessment plan for each year group should be further developed to include a formalised practical performance assessment task.
- Senior management should ensure that all students have access to a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week.
- A review of the current physical education programme should be undertaken by the PE department with a view to expanding all schemes of work to a minimum of six weeks and investigating the inclusion of aquatics at junior cycle.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with notable examples of highly effective practice observed in some lessons.
- All lessons were exemplified by respectful engagement with clear expectations and learning outcomes established from the start. The level of challenge was pitched appropriately for the learners and both teachers and students provided positive support and encouragement throughout the lessons.
- The skill development sections of lessons were well planned with increasingly more complex tasks provided to challenge the students. In almost all lessons, differentiation was incorporated effectively into aspects of the learning.
- Good classroom routines have been developed and embedded within the department and these were a significant aid to efficient lesson management. Students readily assisted in setting up and storing of equipment and co-operated fully with their teachers throughout.
- Students were given an opportunity to take on some aspect of a leadership role in almost all lessons observed. This noteworthy practice of developing students' leadership skills should be enhanced as a means of supporting the development of the key Junior Cycle skills.
- Teacher observation was used throughout lessons to support the continuous assessment of students. It is recommended that a culminating assessment event, where students' physical performance can be formally evaluated, be incorporated into the assessment plan for at least one block of work each year.
- As part of the whole-school literacy strategy, key words were highlighted and reinforced in all Junior Cycle lessons. There is scope to further develop elements of numeracy in the physical education setting.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support is good. All junior-cycle students and the majority of senior-cycle students have access to a double period of PE.
- In senior cycle, TY students have very good access to PE, including an additional Leisure Studies programme. All fifth and sixth-year students receive double periods of PE with the exception of those students who study both higher level Mathematics and LCVP. It is recommended as a matter of priority that all students have access to a minimum of a double period of PE for the full school year.
- A full sized sports hall, a smaller indoor hall and a full sized artificial turf hockey pitch are among the excellent, well-maintained facilities available for the teaching of PE.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities is available. Team sports such as basketball, hockey, camogie, Gaelic football, soccer, volleyball and tag rugby as well as individual pursuits like athletics, dance and tennis are all provided by a dedicated team of teacher volunteers. Whole-school activities such as Active Schools Week and sports day are coordinated by the PE teachers. This commitment to the provision of extra-curricular experiences is highly commended, and valued greatly by school management.
- The PE teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous professional development. Teachers have attended Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) conferences and recent Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) in-services on Wellbeing and dance.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is good. A comprehensive subject plan is in place which outlines all the key areas relevant to the delivery of Physical Education in the school.
- Detailed schemes of work are in existence for almost all curricular areas. At present, these well-developed plans include differentiated learning outcomes and assessment strategies for a four-week module based on a specific curricular area. In order to provide further opportunities for students to deepen their understanding in each curricular area, these schemes should be extended to plan for a minimum of six weeks. The inclusion of aquatics in junior cycle should also be investigated.
- Individual lessons were well prepared with age appropriate, progressive learning activities planned and delivered. During a single-period lesson in TY, time constraints limited the opportunity for students to take the lead in consolidating their learning.
- A range of interesting and novel activities, in keeping with the ethos and spirit of the programme, has been planned as part of the TY student experience. This includes activities such as yoga, rowing, Zumba, outdoor pursuits and an overnight trip to an adventure centre.
- The PE department is well resourced with a range of equipment available to support teaching and learning. The department is well supported by school management in their efforts to add to these resources.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management is very pleased that the report recognises and positively affirms the work being done by the PE Department where notable examples of highly effective practice were noted in the quality of teaching observed.

We are happy that the report also highlights:

- That all lessons were exemplified by respectful engagement with clear expectations and learning outcomes established from the start.
- The well planned skill development sections of lessons that challenged students with increasingly more complex tasks.
- The effective incorporation of differentiation into almost all lessons.
- The good classrooms routines that have been developed and embedded within the department which are a significant aid to efficient lesson management.
- The noteworthy practice of developing students' leadership skills.
- The use of teacher observation throughout lessons to support the continuous assessment of students.
- That the whole-school literacy strategy is reinforced in all Junior Cycle lessons.
- The strong ethos of collaboration and engagement with CPD that exists within the PE department.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Board of Management acknowledges the main recommendations of the report.

- *The assessment plan for each year group should be further developed to include a formalised practical performance assessment task.*

The report positively affirms continuous assessment practices and recommends that a culminating assessment event where students' physical performance can be formally assessed be incorporated into the assessment plan for at least one block of work each year. Management supports this recommendation, as do the members of the PE department who have already committed to introducing the new specification for PE as a short course in September with incoming first years, which emphasises physical activity and performance in all the four strands. There are set assessment tasks currently in place for ascetic sports (gymnastics and dance) and with the introduction of the new JC short course this assessment will be embedded into all areas and will follow the guidelines.

- *Senior management should ensure that all students have access to a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week.*

Management is fully supportive of this recommendation. Presently the vast majority of students do have access to a double period of timetabled PE each week. However a very small cohort who had chosen higher maths and LCVP were unable to access PE due to concurrent timetabling. Senior management has just completed the timetable for the academic year 2017 – 2018 and in the light of this recommendation has ensured that **all** students do now have access to a double period of timetabled PE each week.

- *A review of the current physical education programme should be undertaken by the PE department with a view to expanding all schemes of work to a minimum of six weeks and investigating the inclusion of aquatics at junior cycle.*

The PE department with the full support of management is committed to a review of the current physical education programme with a view to expanding all schemes of work to a minimum of six weeks, and to an investigation of the inclusion of aquatics at junior cycle.

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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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.	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
Good	Good 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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair 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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak 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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;