

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Physical Education**

**REPORT**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Ainm na scoile /<br/>School name</b>       | Scoil Mhuire Secondary School              |
| <b>Seoladh na scoile /<br/>School address</b> | St. Oran's Road<br>Buncrana<br>Co. Donegal |
| <b>Uimhir rolla /<br/>Roll number</b>         | 62770C                                     |

**Date of Inspection: 08-05-2019**



---

**An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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. Teaching, learning 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; a response was not received from the board.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

|  |   |
|--|---|
| <b>Date of inspection</b>  | 08-05-2019  |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul> |

### School context

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational voluntary Catholic secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). It has a current enrolment of 699 students. In addition to the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied to its students. The school also offers the Junior Certificate School Programme as part of its participation in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools, the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching in lessons observed was good.
- Peer assessment was used in the majority of lessons to support student learning and PE is included on school reports; some peer assessment tasks were less effectively structured.
- Timetabling arrangements for students in junior-cycle are good; however, current arrangements for students in TY, fifth and sixth-year are inadequate.
- From second-year, the curriculum is mainly provided to students in gender-divided groups which is in contrast to the co-educational ethos of the school.
- Outdoor facilities for supporting teaching and learning are good; constraints in indoor space limits the student experience.
- Subject planning for junior cycle PE is well developed; planning for senior cycle PE, in particular TY, is underdeveloped.

#### Recommendations

- The PE department should review their assessment procedures to improve areas such as peer assessment and reporting strategies.
- Senior management should ensure that all students receive a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week for the full school year.
- A review of the practice of separating students by gender for PE should be undertaken by the PE department.
- The PE department should revisit the subject department plan with a particular emphasis on developing the plan for all senior cycle students.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in lessons observed during the evaluation was good.
- In line with good practice, learning intentions were shared at the start of the majority of lessons. However, adequate time was not allocated during, or at the end of lessons, to review the learning intentions. This strategy is most effective when the learning intentions are reviewed with students.
- Very positive relationships were evident in all classroom interactions. Students participated enthusiastically in lessons and derived a sense of enjoyment from the activities selected.
- Good support for numerical skill development was seamlessly integrated into lessons. For instance, in a senior fitness lesson, students were provided with opportunities to plot health related information on a graph. In a junior games lesson, students were provided with opportunities to estimate distance. These techniques effectively supported students' numeracy.
- Opportunities to reinforce the development of students' technical language were missed in some of the lessons observed. The whole-school DEIS target related to improving students' oral literacy skills was underdeveloped in the lessons observed. The PE department should plan to support the improvement of students' literacy in line with identified whole-school targets.
- Digital technology was used to good effect in the majority of lessons where it was observed. Appropriately, selected video clips were integrated into lessons to support students' understanding of technical skills in athletics events. However, the effectiveness of video delay technology, designed to assist students' evaluation of their skill development, had limited impact. Better planning for the use of this technology would have increased its effectiveness and this should be addressed.
- High quality questioning was a key strength of all lessons observed. Teachers used questioning to activate prior learning, to create links with other subject areas and to support student self-assessment.
- Students were provided with opportunities to engage in peer observation and peer assessment in the majority of lessons observed. This good practice allows students to take more responsibility for their own learning. The effectiveness of this methodology has not been fully realised. Teachers should, when planning lessons, consider how the skills of peer assessment can be better taught in a progressive, age appropriate manner.
- In some lessons, teaching time was lost at the start of the lessons due to the excessive time taken for students to get changed and the extended time spent on introducing the topic of the lesson. Routines that support the maximising of teaching time should be established

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is satisfactory.
- Timetabling for junior cycle students is good; all students are timetabled for a double period of PE in line with the provisions of Circular 79/2018. The school is a phase one school for the implementation of Leaving Certificate PE. Currently, fifth year students can choose to study PE as an exam subject; timetabling for this cohort of students is appropriate. Senior-cycle

students, including TY, who do not choose exam PE have the option to select non-exam PE; this optional provision is inadequate. Senior management should ensure that all students are timetabled for a minimum of a double period of PE for the full school year.

- Physical education units of work are provided in many activity areas in gender segregated groups from second-year onwards which is in contrast to the co-educational ethos of the school. A review of this practice should be undertaken.
- Good outdoor facilities are available for teaching and learning in PE which includes a pitch, hard court area and gravel track, and these are well maintained. Indoor facilities consist of an assembly hall which is inadequate in terms of space, flooring and changing facilities. The assembly hall is also used extensively for meetings, exams, musicals and other whole-school events. This can result in loss of teaching time when the assembly hall is in demand for other events and thus impacts on the overall student experience in PE.
- Students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities including team activities such as camogie, Gaelic football, hurling, and soccer, as well as individual activities such as athletics and girls active. Students with a keen interest in sport are encouraged through their involvement with the Emerging Talent Programme. Whole-school events such as sports day, first-year fun day and activities during positive mental health week also support and extend students' learning outside of the PE classroom. The voluntary involvement of staff and the support of management for these initiatives is praiseworthy.
- Commendably, PE is included in end-of-year and Christmas reports to parents. Comments tend to focus on attendance and participation. It would be useful for the PE department to consider how to report more effectively on students' learning in PE.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good and a detailed scheme of work is in place. It is very good that whole-school DEIS targets have been developed into practical elements that the PE department plans to implement to support the attainment of these targets.
- Individual units of learning have been developed for almost all curricular areas at junior-cycle. Currently, a variety of templates are being used by the PE department. It would be worthwhile for the PE teachers to select the template that best meets their needs to allow for greater collaborative planning. Planning for State examination PE has commenced but planning for TY and senior-cycle (non-State examination) PE is underdeveloped.
- The short course for PE has been introduced for current first-year students. It is good practice that the PE department is reviewing the content of the course to ensure it is meeting the needs of their students. Students in second and third year undertake four and six units of learning respectively. The PE department should undertake a review of the PE plan across all age groups and extend all units of learning to a minimum of six weeks duration.
- Individual lessons were well planned with age appropriate progressive learning activities selected. Worksheets and task cue cards were well designed and provided students with clear information to support their learning.

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.

## 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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

| Level               | Description   | Example of descriptive terms  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Very Good</b>    | <b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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 |
| <b>Good</b>         | <b>Good</b> 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   |
| <b>Satisfactory</b> | <b>Satisfactory</b> 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  |
| <b>Fair</b>         | <b>Fair</b> 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   |
| <b>Weak</b>         | <b>Weak</b> 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;   |