

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

**Subject Inspection in Physical Education**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Saint Columba's College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Stranorlar County Donegal
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	62861F

**Date of Inspection: 09-03-2018**



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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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	08-03-2018 & 09-03-2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Saint Columba's College is a co-educational voluntary secondary school operating under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). The school has a current enrolment of 876 students. In addition to the Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate, the school offers the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme to cater for the needs of the students.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in lessons observed was good with examples of very effective practice observed in some lessons.
- Peer assessment was used in the majority of lessons to support student learning; clearer structuring of peer assessment tasks would benefit all students.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is satisfactory; currently, sixth year students have no access to Physical Education (PE).
- A very effective information sheet is prepared by teachers in advance of parent-teacher meetings; however, PE does not feature on any school reports currently.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation is very good; teacher engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) is noteworthy.
- Long-term subject planning is well developed; however, the short duration of four-week blocks of work is limiting the opportunity to provide an appropriate depth of curricular experience.

#### Recommendations

- The PE department should investigate methods to explicitly teach peer assessment techniques in an age appropriate, progressive manner.
- Senior management should ensure that all students receive a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week for the full school year and that all lessons are delivered by teachers who hold appropriate qualifications.
- In order to keep parents and students better informed, PE should be included in school reports.
- The PE department should extend the blocks of work to a minimum of six weeks' duration so as to provide deeper student learning opportunities.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in lessons observed was good with examples of very effective practice observed in some lessons.
- Students were familiar with the well-established routines used at the start of lessons. These clear procedures provided a very clear structure to the lessons as teachers provided an overview of the intended learning outcomes.
- Students were well engaged by the tasks selected and participated with enthusiasm in all lessons observed. A good rapport was evident between students in all interactions.
- The use of the Sport Education model in a junior games lesson provided students with good leadership opportunities; this is very effective practice. Leadership skills developed in this way should be built on in subsequent years.
- Regular questioning was used in all lessons observed. Global questioning was the method used most frequently. The PE department should consider the use of other methods of questioning to ensure all students are heard.
- Very good assessment practices were observed in the majority of lessons. Self-assessment worksheets were used appropriately to establish students' prior knowledge at the start of a block of work. PE teachers use this information to build up individual student profiles. The use of peer assessment in a junior games lesson was a significant aid to the student experience. All students will benefit from developing their skills in peer-assessment activities.
- In some lessons, differentiation was used to good effect to challenge learners of all ability levels. However, there was scope to further differentiate learning tasks in other lessons in order to challenge the more-able students. Teachers should, when planning lessons, give greater consideration to students' ability levels.
- A positive, calm and caring atmosphere pervaded all lessons. Interactions between students and teachers were very positive, encouraging and supportive. These positive relationships were a beneficial support to the student experience of PE.
- Students demonstrated a good interest in the topics under study in lessons observed. However, during aspects of some lessons there was scope to increase student activity levels. A reduction in group sizes is one method that could be considered by the PE department when planning to increase activity levels.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and school support is satisfactory.
- It is positive to see double periods timetabled for all junior year groups and fifth-year students. TY students also have very good provision with a single Sports Leader Award lesson scheduled in addition to their double PE lesson. However, despite a recommendation in a previous inspection, sixth-year students have no access to PE currently. As a matter of priority, all students must be timetabled for a minimum of one double period of PE per week for the full school year.
- Facilities available for the teaching and learning of PE in the school are well maintained; the school has access to a PE hall and outdoor pitch and are in the process of developing an all-weather playing area. However, there are some safety concerns in relation to the facilities

and in particular the changing areas. A number of students were late to class and reported the reason for this was due to the inadequate space available in the changing rooms.

- The subject is organised and delivered by a team of teachers who work conscientiously and who are mostly deployed according to their qualifications. Senior management should ensure that all lessons in PE are delivered by teachers who hold qualifications recognised by the Teaching Council for the teaching of the subject.
- PE does not feature on school reports currently. In order to keep parents and students informed about progress in the subject, PE should be added to all future reports.
- The concurrent timetabling of class groups is inevitable in a school of this size. School management should endeavour to ensure that where teaching spaces must be shared by more than one class, the classes timetabled together come from the same year group.
- The voluntary commitment of a significant number of school staff and the support of management to provide for the range of extra-curricular activities are highly commended.

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

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is very good; individual lessons were very well planned.
- There is a comprehensive scheme of work in place which provides for students to experience four weeks of each curricular strand. The PE department should review this structure in light of their proposed move to a short course for junior-cycle students and extend the amount of time students spend in each strand to provide deeper student learning opportunities.
- Commendably, the PE department demonstrates very good engagement with professional development opportunities both nationally and as part of the vibrant community of practice in the local area.
- An information sheet prepared by PE teachers for each student in advance of parent-teacher meetings is an indicator of very effective practice. This sheet provides key information to parents about the student experience in PE lessons in a range of areas.

### **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 in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement 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 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;