

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

**Subject Inspection in Physical Education**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Saint Mary's Diocesan School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Beamore Road Drogheda County Louth
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	63841E

**Date of Inspection: 13-09-2017**



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

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	13 September 2017
<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 four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Saint Mary's Diocesan School, Drogheda, is a voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. The school has a current enrolment of 788 male students and offers the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory subject for all students.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- High levels of student engagement and participation were observed in all lessons.
- Opportunities for the development of student leadership were observed in a small number of lessons.
- A wide variety of whole-school extra and co-curricular opportunities, supported by teachers and management, adds significant value to the overall student experience.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for PE is satisfactory; the school has the capacity to provide a broader curriculum than currently provided.
- Long-term subject planning is well developed; the short duration of three-week blocks of work is limiting the opportunities to develop self-directed autonomous learning experiences.

#### Recommendations

- The PE department should plan to provide incrementally appropriate opportunities for all students to develop their leadership skills.
- 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.
- A review of the current subject plan should be undertaken to ensure all curricular areas are being delivered with equal depth.
- The duration of blocks of work should be extended, by the PE department, to a minimum of six weeks for each topic to allow for greater depth and assessment opportunities.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in observed lessons was good.
- Classroom management was very good and students were co-operative, attentive and participated enthusiastically in all lessons. The classroom atmosphere was very positive and students enjoyed their physical education lessons and achieved the high expectations that their teachers set for them.
- Students experienced an appropriate emphasis on literacy and numeracy in the majority of lessons. Teachers reinforced technical language at regular points during the lesson. Very commendable practice in numeracy was observed in a junior games lesson when the teacher seamlessly incorporated opportunities for numeracy at transition points.
- A range of performance standards was in evidence in each of the lessons observed. Teachers made very good efforts in the majority of lessons to ensure all students remained engaged. There was scope to further differentiate the learning in some lessons in order to challenge the more-able students.
- Very effective practice was observed in a junior games lesson when students were asked to observe a peer performance and identify what worked well. Providing students with such opportunities to reflect on their own learning is a cornerstone of developing autonomous learners.
- A small number of students were provided with an opportunity to take on a leadership role during observed lessons. This commendable practice, of developing student leadership in the class, should be introduced into lessons in an incremental manner for all year groups.
- Teacher observation was used throughout lessons to support the continuous assessment of students. These observations inform the reporting of PE on all formal school reports. It is good practice that marks are awarded for both attainment and effort in lessons and that senior students showed a clear understanding of this system and how their final mark was determined.
- The whole-school approach to physical activity, for example the involvement in the Health Promoting Schools, Green Schools and 100km initiatives is a significant addition to the overall student experience. These initiatives support students to deepen their understanding of concepts taught during PE lessons.
- Students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities including team activities such as basketball, gaelic football, futsal, rugby, soccer as well as individual activities such as athletics, badminton, golf, handball, pitch and putt, table tennis and tennis. The dedication of staff, both within and outside the PE department, to the provision of extra-curricular opportunities is highly valued by school management.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is satisfactory.
- PE is a valued subject on the curriculum; this is reflected in the timetable provision. It is commendable that all students are provided with a minimum of one double period for PE every week. In addition, sixth-year students who are not eligible for LCVP are timetabled for

an additional double period of PE; these sixth-year students receive very good subject provision.

- The subject is organised and delivered by a team of committed and conscientious teachers, who are mostly deployed according to their qualifications. 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.
- The school has the capacity to provide a broader curriculum than is currently being provided. Games, both invasion and net and fielding, are very well provided for. There is significant scope to develop the other strands of the curriculum to provide a more balanced experience for students. Thus, it is recommended that a review of the current subject plan be undertaken to ensure all curricular areas are being delivered with equal depth.
- The facilities and resources available for teaching and learning are very good and maintained to a high standard. Students have access to a full-sized sports hall, a small fitness area, an outdoor astroturf area and large playing fields.

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

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good. A subject coordinator is in place and a comprehensive subject department plan has been developed.
- It is commendable to see common schemes of work in place for all year groups. A high level of collaborative planning has taken place within the department and the PE teachers have undertaken a recent review of whole-school PE plan. At present, these plans provide for nine different three-week blocks of work each year. The short duration of three-week blocks of work is limiting the opportunities to develop self-directed autonomous learning experiences. The duration of blocks of work should be extended by the PE department to a minimum of six weeks for each topic to allow for greater depth and assessment opportunities.
- Individual lessons were well prepared and, in many cases, equipment required for lessons was set up in advance of the lesson. Very clear classroom routines were reinforced and explicitly taught to junior classes. These routines are a significant aid to student learning.
- Well-developed assessment guidelines have been produced for all curricular areas and these assessments inform reporting to parents on formal school reports. It is noteworthy that assessment results from group fitness tests have been used to illustrate numeracy in the school diary.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals 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**

- Acknowledgement of the established, supportive and well-informed PE teachers and their rapport with their students that allowed seamless integration of numeracy and student self-assessment and reflection.
- Acknowledgment of the well-cared-for facilities.
- Commendation of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities alongside a broad teaching curriculum supported by teachers outside of the department and school management.
- Recognised emphasis on whole school approach to physical activity and health.
- The recognition of the good teaching observed in the school.
- Affirmation of the well-developed long term planning strategies.
- The credit given for formal reporting in a clear way by the department.
- The noting of the enthusiasm of staff and management toward school improvement.

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

- With regard to the recommendation on student leadership, the board feels that the timing of the inspection at year start may have led to some gelling issues but will work with the department in regards to initiatives they wish to pursue to enhance this opportunity, as student leadership is genuinely valued by this community
- Regarding the qualifications of teachers, the board understands that additional/extra PE classes were facilitated in senior cycle. These extra classes can be removed which will lead to the one double in TY being taken by an unqualified teacher being taken by PE qualified personnel
- In regards to the last two points on planning, review is something which is continuously undertaken by the department and the context of the shorter blocks was that the department had moved from 5-week rotations to 3-week rotations this year as an experiment to provide more diversity in the curriculum. This will be reviewed again and the recommendation to work towards 6-week rotations will be incorporated where possible. In this review, the time given to all areas on the curriculum will be examined.

## 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;