Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Vincent's Secondary School</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Seatown Place  
Dundalk  
County Louth |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number   | 63900R                           |

Date of Inspection: 26-10-2017
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

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date(s) of inspection</th>
<th>26-10-2017</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and key staff</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and physical education teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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School context
Saint Vincent’s Secondary School is an all-girls voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education: An Irish Schools’ Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 911 students. The Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes are all offered by the school. The optional TY is very popular; currently, six class groups are enrolled.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings
• The quality of teaching and learning in observed lessons ranged from good to very good.
• Good levels of differentiation were observed in most lessons with a variety of activities selected; in some lessons there was scope to further differentiate the learning in order to challenge the more-able students.
• Subject provision is good; however, currently sixth-year students following the Leaving Certificate programme have no access to Physical Education (PE).
• Indoor facilities for supporting teaching and learning are very good; constraints in outdoor space limit the delivery of the full curriculum.
• Subject department planning is well advanced within the PE department; at present not all curricular strands are provided for.
• The support of management and staff for the provision of a wide variety of extra-curricular activities is praiseworthy.

Recommendations
• The PE department should plan for further differentiation, in particular to challenge the more skilful participants.
• School 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 PE plan should be undertaken by the PE department with a view to including all strands of the junior-cycle curriculum.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in observed lessons ranged from good to very good.
- Good classroom routines were well established: for example roll call, phone collection, and the sharing of learning intentions at the start of the lesson. These good routines were a significant aid to student learning and it was clear that the positive relationships between students and teachers were well established.
- Very effective practice was observed when some students had the opportunity to take on a leadership role in class. For example, during a junior games lesson and a junior gymnastic lesson, students were asked to lead a small group of other students in stretching. This very good practice of developing student leadership skills should be planned for in a developmental way for all year groups.
- Very good self-assessment and peer-assessment opportunities were provided for students in all lessons, for example students used tablet devices in one lesson to engage in peer video analysis. The PE department should build on this very good practice with some deeper questioning during reflections. Furthermore, the school is considering the addition of a formal physical assessment in each year; this addition to the range of assessment practices would be worthwhile.
- High levels of student activity and engagement were observed in the majority of lessons. During some lessons there was scope, especially during transition points, for higher levels of student activity. When planning lessons, teachers should give consideration to how activity levels can be maximised throughout the lesson.
- Literacy and numeracy were incorporated seamlessly into all lessons. Key words and technical language were reinforced throughout. The use of arithmetical skills was observed in all lessons. In order to enhance the student experience of numeracy, the PE department should widen the scope of numeracy to also include spatial awareness, estimation and problem solving.
- A wide variety of student abilities was present in every class. Teachers made commendable efforts to differentiate providing appropriate options for less skilful students. There was scope to provide further differentiation and challenge for the more skilful students.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used to good effect in a junior gymnastics lesson. Students used QR codes to access demonstration videos for various skills which they viewed on their tablet devices to assist their learning. This commendable use of ICT as a learning tool is a noteworthy initiative.
- Students benefitted from appropriate and clear worksheets. The language used in the worksheets was accessible and students were familiar with their use. As a further development of this practice, the PE department should consider appropriate times in the block of work to use worksheets and the development of online versions for use in the PE classes with access to tablet devices.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support is good.
Students from first to fifth year all have access to a double period of PE. Currently, only sixth-year students pursuing the LCA programme have access to PE through their Leisure and Recreation course. It is recommended that all students receive a minimum of a weekly double period of PE for the full school year.

The concurrent timetabling of class groups is inevitable in a school of this size. School management are to be commended for ensuring that where teaching spaces must be shared by more than one class, the classes timetabled together come from the same year group.

The indoor facilities available for teaching and learning are maintained to a very high standard with a full-sized gym and a small recently refurbished fitness area. Provision of a full range of teaching and learning experiences is limited by the unavailability of an outdoor teaching area.

The school has formulated long-term plans to develop an outdoor teaching area; in the short term, school management and the PE department should investigate all options to reduce the loss of teaching time when the sports hall is unavailable due to other whole-school activities.

Students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities including team activities such as basketball, camogie, cricket, Gaelic football, and rugby, as well as individual activities such as athletics and badminton. The voluntary involvement of staff and the support of management for these initiatives are praiseworthy.

It is commendable that PE appears on school reports; it is clear that PE teachers know their students on a personal level as evident in the personalised, affirming comments on students’ engagement with PE provided in such reports.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good and it is clear that the PE department and school management place a high value on CPD.

- There was a good structure to all lessons; however in a minority of lessons too much time was spent on introductory activities. This limited the time available for the main body of the lesson. When planning lessons, teachers should consider how they can structure the lesson more efficiently to achieve a balance in all key areas.

- Very detailed schemes of work are in place for all curricular areas and almost all strands of the curriculum are being addressed at junior cycle. The PE department should investigate options to provide the adventure games and aquatics strands to all junior-cycle students.

- There is a high level of collaboration within the PE department as evidenced in common schemes of work and team teaching.

- The PE department should review the number of blocks of work that are planned currently for each year group. A reduction to four blocks a year would allow for deeper student engagement and the development of rich task-assessment practices.

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

The Board would like to commend the PE department on the quality of teaching and learning observed in the report.

The Board commends the PE Dept for their positive response to the school’s ICT, literacy, numeracy and AFL initiatives as is reflected in this report. They have engaged successfully in the school’s iPad initiative and this is reflected positively in this report as commendable practice. They have engaged with the emphasis on structuring lessons around learning intentions, with AFL assessment initiatives and are currently active participants in teacher peer observation initiatives.

The Board commends the PE Dept for encouraging wider staff engagement in extra-curricular sport which plays a significant role in the holistic development of students in the school.

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 PE department has begun a review of the PE plan with a view to including the aquatics strand of the curriculum.

School management has committed to a consultation process with the teaching staff to identify which subjects will forfeit class contact time in order to facilitate the introduction of timetabled PE in 6th year.

The PE Dept is reviewing their practice to further differentiate to challenge the more skilful students.
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.

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<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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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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<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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