

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

**Subject Inspection in Physical Education**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Glenstal Abbey School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Murroe Co Limerick
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	64150F

**Date of Inspection: 03-10-2016**



**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.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Date of inspection</b>	03-10-2016
<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 six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Glenstal Abbey School is a fee-paying, boys' voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Board of Governors of Glenstal Abbey. There are 246 boys enrolled in the current school year and the vast majority of the students are boarding students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- Students are very well engaged in their learning in Physical Education and lesson atmosphere is very positive.
- Exemplary procedures are in place for assessment and reporting in Physical Education.
- The quality of planning and preparation is excellent and the school is rightly proud of its recent achievement of the Active School Flag.
- The facilities available for the teaching of Physical Education are excellent and the department is very well resourced.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teaching methodologies that provide opportunities for student-directed learning in lessons should be further developed.
- The sequencing of activities in circuit training should provide periods of rest and activity for specific muscle groups, as appropriate.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good and students are achieving very well in physical education lessons.
- Learning intentions were shared with students at the start of lessons often incorporating clear links with previous and future learning. This practice is very worthwhile as it helps to contextualise learning for students and enables them to become reflective learners.
- Clear, concise explanations by teachers aided students' understanding and assisted the smooth operation of all lessons. However, poor acoustics in the physical education hall meant that it was sometimes difficult for all students to clearly hear what the teacher was saying. A range of strategies was discussed to mitigate this.
- Teacher and student demonstrations were a clear aid to learning and the whiteboard was used very effectively to list and to emphasise the key points of various skills. A range of tasks was set which facilitated the involvement of all students. Students who were unable to physically participate were set meaningful tasks relevant to the lesson such as keeping statistics of passes completed during a basketball lesson and performing the roles of coach and recorder during a health-related activity lesson. This is good practice.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used very effectively to enhance learning through the use of a computer and data projector, and heart-rate monitors, as appropriate to the lesson. The fact that the school sports hall has wireless internet access is of considerable benefit in this regard.
- Lesson atmosphere was very positive in all lessons, characterised by friendly, respectful interactions between teachers and students. Teachers provided good individual and group attention to students, as required, and were very alert in providing assistance to any students experiencing difficulty in completing set tasks.
- Students readily asked questions, and their answers to questions posed by their teachers and the inspector indicated a good level of understanding and an ability to apply learning.
- Some suggestions were made with regard to the sequencing of activities during lessons on circuit training with a view to ensuring that different muscle groups experience periods of rest and activity, as appropriate.
- Exemplary procedures are in place for assessment and reporting in Physical Education. Clear, detailed formative commentary is provided in reports on students' learning and progress. This is highly commended.
- Additionally, information is provided on students' performance and achievement on a range of physical fitness tests. The fact that the emphasis in these tests is developmental, focussing on helping students to understand how their physical capacities may change as a result of growth and maturation, is appropriate and again is highly commended.
- Notable efforts were made to incorporate aspects of assessment for learning into teaching methodologies. These included providing students with opportunities to comment on each other's performances and to take some leadership roles during lessons. The latter strategy merits further development and expansion through the provision of learning opportunities that incrementally increase opportunities for students to lead and take decisions about their own learning. Possible scenarios through which this could take place were discussed. These could complement the school's existing practices with regard to student questionnaires,

surveys and activities which facilitate student choice, all of which are aimed at enhancing the student voice in the learning process.

- Very good opportunities to develop students' literacy and numeracy skills were provided. This included the frequent use of the whiteboard by both teachers and students to emphasise key terms and to note important information, and performing calculations to estimate resting heart rate and maximum heart rate.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The timetabling arrangements for Physical Education in the school are very good with all students having access to a double period per week. In TY, provision alternates between a double period one week and a treble period the following week. This level of provision is very good and facilitates participation by students in a range of additional activities in keeping with the spirit and ethos of the TY programme.
- The timetabling of the subject in the school has ensured that students are in base classes for Physical Education. This has helped to ensure that physical education classes are relatively small, thereby allowing teachers to provide more individual attention to students who need it.
- An extensive range of extra-curricular physical activities is provided in the school with teachers and external coaches involved in their delivery. Pride in representing the school and the promotion of the school values and ethos are key aspects which the school promotes through these activities.
- The school is rightly proud of its recent achievement of the Active School Flag, reflecting as it does, the comprehensive, whole-school nature of the school's commitment to physical activity. The support of the school's senior management team in the achievement of this award is noted.
- The range of facilities and resources, including ICT resources, available for the teaching and learning of Physical Education is excellent. These are very well maintained and enable the school to provide a broad and balanced programme of Physical Education and a rich learning experience to students.
- Teachers have accessed an extensive range of professional development opportunities and regular meetings between teachers, both formal and informal, facilitate the dissemination of key information throughout the subject department.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Whole-school planning for Physical Education is of a very high quality. The subject plan is a comprehensive document which outlines all aspects of the delivery of the subject in the school. It has clearly been the result of considerable thought and effort on behalf of the physical education team. Particularly commendable is the fact that specific teaching methodologies have been documented to achieve the aims and objectives which have been set by the department and that the plan aims to increase students' sense of responsibility for their own health and wellbeing as they get older.
- Opportunities that have been planned for older students to become involved in coaching roles with younger students are particularly praiseworthy as these can provide rich learning experiences for both cohorts of students.
- The physical education department's awareness of the capacity of ICT to enhance teaching and learning and the inclusion of all students is noteworthy.

- Individual lessons were very well planned and operated very efficiently as a result.
- Detailed minutes of subject department meetings have been maintained with key decisions noted for action.

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 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.

## 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
<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 <b>very good</b> 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;