

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

**Subject Inspection in Physical Education**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Balla Secondary School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Balla Castlebar County Mayo
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	64500G

**Date of Inspection: 04-04-2019**



---

**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 of the school 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.

## **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>Dates of inspection</b>	03-04-2019 and 04-04-2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant teachers</li></ul>

### School context

Balla Secondary School is a co-educational Catholic school owned by the community through a limited company and trusteeship is vested in the company's board of directors. Current enrolment stands at 299. The school offers the Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Part of the supports for students is a special class for students with autism/autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) sanctioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good; instances of excellent and satisfactory practices were also observed.
- The student experience is narrowed by the games-based activities which change from week to week and limit the student outcomes in a number of junior cycle class groups; a balance of teacher-student activity needs to be created in some lessons.
- The quality of assessment practices observed in most lessons was an area for improvement; the integration of Physical Education into the school self-evaluation (SSE) action plan for collaborative peer review will support the development of assessment practices.
- Overall whole-school support and provision is satisfactory; less than half of lessons are delivered by teachers who do not hold the appropriate qualifications and sixth-year students are only timetabled for forty minutes of Physical Education per week.
- Senior management and teachers have a concrete plan for the improvement of equipment and facilities for Physical Education, in conjunction with the local community.
- Subject planning and preparation is very good; however, the junior cycle collaborative plans were not observed in practice.

#### Recommendations

- The learning experience for students should be strengthened by the delivery of lessons aimed at achieving learning outcomes over a progression of weeks in line with the junior cycle plan that has been created by the teachers of Physical Education, and by the integration of Physical Education into the SSE action plan for collaborative peer review.
- Senior management should ensure that sixth-year students are timetabled for a minimum of eighty minutes Physical Education every week.
- The board of management should ensure that all lessons are delivered by teachers who hold qualifications recognised by the Teaching Council for the teaching of Physical Education.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is good; instances of excellent and satisfactory practices were also observed.
- The student experience was respectful and positive. There was an excellent relationship and rapport evident in all lessons. The behaviour of students in all lessons was very good.
- Warm-ups were predominantly teacher-led. It is advised that students be given the opportunity to lead warm-ups appropriate for their age and stage of development, to cultivate their ability to make choices about how they can best present to others and use a wide range of subject specific vocabulary. This student-centred approach enables and empowers students to become active learners.
- A supportive learning relationship was observed in the special class. A station teaching arrangement provides an individual learning experience towards the goals of developing hand-eye co-ordination, balance and an appreciation for collaboration. The tasks at the stations represent challenge by choice, personalising learner experiences. The organisation of the students, equipment, space, and time, create very good conditions for student-led learning, which could be extended to all mainstream physical education lessons.
- The student experience is narrowed by the games-based activities which change from week to week and limit the student outcomes in a number of junior cycle class groups. The impact of this approach is a narrow learning experience where the depth and breadth of the learning outcomes is not achieved.
- The assessment practices observed in most lessons was an area for improvement. The teachers communicated learning intentions; however, at times, the learning intentions were too broad in nature, and clarity in the intended learning was not evident. The teachers posed questions in all lessons observed, however, closed and global questioning dominated. The development of learning intentions and effective questioning practices should be explored in line with the *Focus on Learning* toolkits from the NCCA. The SSE action plan for collaborative peer review will support the development of assessment practices.
- Transition year and the special class experience a unit of learning in Aquatics in the local swimming pool. The inclusion of aquatics as a unit of learning for all students in junior cycle was discussed.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall subject provision and whole school support for Physical Education is satisfactory.
- Less than half of lessons are delivered by teachers who do not possess the appropriate qualifications. It is recommended that the board of management ensure that all lessons are delivered by a teacher who is appropriately qualified, as recognised by the Teaching Council, in the subject area.
- Almost all students are timetabled for at least eighty minutes of Physical Education per week except for sixth-year students who are timetabled for forty minutes per week only. It is recommended that all sixth year students be timetabled for at least eighty minutes of Physical Education per week.
- It is notable that students in the special class are timetabled for one hundred and twenty minutes every week with a qualified teacher of Physical Education.

- The indoor facilities available are very good; the school has well established links with local sporting groups. There are future plans for the development of a community based all-weather pitch in the school grounds. The leadership and vision to date in relation to this project are very good.
- Attendance was not monitored and recorded simultaneously in lessons observed. This aspect of student management is an area for improvement. It was reported that this was due to a lack of digital devices and wifi access in the hall, preventing teachers from entering returns into the online attendance monitoring package. Senior management reported that the infrastructure will be put in place to support this development.
- All junior-cycle students are also timetabled for an additional forty minute lesson of games. It was reported that this lesson is being developed into a modular wellbeing programme with a focus on physical activity, healthy eating, fundamental movement skills and health related fitness.
- Physical Education is included in bi-annual school reports. A review of the report comments indicate the application of the language of learning is an area for improvement. A discussion between the inspector and teachers took place in relation to reporting on student progress based on the language of learning.

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

- The overall planning and preparation are very good; extensive and detailed collaborative plans have been developed and are available in the online shared platform.
- Minutes of departmental meetings indicate a very effective level of collaboration with senior management in relation to the development of Physical Education. Attendance at continuing professional development (CPD) events were recorded in the subject plan. It is commended that the senior management and teachers of Physical Education have a two-year plan to improve the physical education equipment to enable all strands of the curriculum to be delivered.
- The 2003 junior-cycle physical education syllabus has been aligned with the teaching strategies and assessment with the Junior Cycle Framework, however, this was not observed in practice and students reported participating in a different physical activity every week. Implementing the department's own plan consistently will help students achieve relevant learning outcomes through lesson progression over a number of weeks.
- There is an effective cross-curricular plan in place for transition year Physical Education through the implementation of the *PDST GAA Future Leaders* programme.
- A good collaborative senior-cycle plan is in place. This plan provides effectively for a wide variety of strands of physical education.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal 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 of Management welcomes and is thankful for the very positive report on the quality of teaching and learning within the Physical Education Department at 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 Board will put in place the supports necessary to address the three recommendations outlined in the report.

- \* The school will ensure that the delivery of lessons aimed at achieving learning outcomes over a progression of weeks are adhered to.
- \* The school looks forward to developing Senior Cycle Physical Education further and hope to introduce Leaving Certificate PE as an examinable subject from 2020 onwards.
- \* As part of the whole school curriculum review and in line with the needs of the school, the recruitment of another PE teacher will be prioritised in the future as our student numbers grow.

## 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;