

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Mary's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballysadare County Sligo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65130E

Date of Inspection: 18-10-2019



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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 1 and 2 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	17 - 18 October 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two (eighty minute) lessons• Examinations of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

School context

Saint Mary's Secondary School is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). It offers a broad curriculum including Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Current enrolment stands at 131.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The student experience in Physical Education is characterised by excellent classroom routines, exemplary student behaviour, and high-quality support for students with special educational needs in all mainstream lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with high-quality, collaborative learner experiences a feature of all lessons observed.
- The assessment practices observed in most lessons were good, and reflective moments were designed effectively to give students the opportunity to self-regulate and set goals.
- Overall whole-school support and provision is fair; currently, TY, fifth and sixth-year students are not timetabled for physical education lessons.
- Although there is good intent by school management to improve on equipment and facilities for the subject, the current student experience is narrowed by the limitations of the facilities and equipment.
- Subject planning and preparation for the subject are very good.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that all TY, fifth and sixth-year students are timetabled for Physical Education for a minimum of eighty minutes every week.
- The board of management and school management need to explore every possible avenue to develop the equipment and facilities for Physical Education.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is very good, with high-quality, collaborative learner experiences a feature of all lessons observed.
- Warm-ups were teacher-led predominantly. 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. Such a student-centred approach enables and empowers students to become active learners.
- Effective questions promoted interest, challenge and engagement for the students. Questioning was well planned, related to learning intentions, was accompanied by appropriate wait time, and allowed for student collaboration before answering.
- Students experience a personalised learning experience and are challenged by the inclusion of choice and modification in tasks and games. In the context of a very small general purpose room, the organisation of students, equipment, space and time create very good conditions for student-led learning.
- Students were proactive and self-directed when choosing differentiated tasks. They worked effectively in groups and demonstrated the ability to negotiate, discuss and reason. They were engaged in highly effective social development, skill enhancement and problem-solving tasks.
- The student experience of the curriculum is narrowed by the limitations of the facilities and equipment. Inclement weather also limits the continuity and development of student outcomes. However, the limited resources available are optimised through very good pedagogical decisions, responsiveness and flexibility by the teachers. Students demonstrated deep learning, with articulate answers, in response to questions posed during the inspection.
- The assessment practice observed in most lessons was good. Reflective moments were designed effectively to give students the opportunity to self-regulate and set goals. The appendix of the Physical Education Short Course Assessment Guidelines contains reflective statements which would be useful to extend current formative assessment practices.
- An examination of a sample of report comments indicates the need for the physical education department to use the language of learning. Implementation of the guidance provided by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment—in the booklet *Ongoing Reporting for Teaching and Learning*—is recommended in this regard. It is advised that classroom-based descriptors are used for reporting on Junior Cycle classroom-based assessments only.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall subject provision and whole school support for Physical Education is fair.
- Half of students are timetabled for at least eighty minutes of Physical Education per week. TY, fifth and sixth-year students are not timetabled for Physical Education. It is recommended that all senior-cycle students are timetabled for at least eighty minutes of Physical Education per week.
- There are long-term plans for the development of equipment, facilities and digital learning technologies. In the meantime, the school has a small, indoor general purpose hall and four outdoor courts, whose surface requires upgrading. The equipment available for teaching and learning of the *Gymnastics* strand is weak, with appropriate gymnastics equipment needed

to implement this strand of the curriculum. School management reported that the *Gymnastics* equipment and a mobile device will be provided to the physical education department as soon as possible.

- There is adequate storage space for current equipment. However, the storage room for physical education equipment is not appropriately organised and the space is not optimised due to a lack of shelving. Better storage systems are required. The use of an additional available storage space with shutters is also available.
- The physical education department collaborates effectively with Sligo Sports Partnership to organise additional physical activities including zumba, dance and yoga at lunchtime for fifteen weeks each year.
- TY students are timetabled for a Leisure Studies lesson for eighty minutes every week. This includes learning experiences in dance, yoga, net games, outdoor adventure, GAA Future Leaders, surfing and certified coaching courses. It is recommended that the TY programme also includes timetabled Physical Education with a qualified teacher of Physical Education.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning and preparation for Junior Cycle Physical Education are very good. It is dynamic, responsive to and reflective of the context, available facilities and needs of the students. Teachers demonstrate reflective practice and sound professional judgement.
- Planning exists for half of the strands of the curriculum. Teachers are advised to ensure that units of learning are planned in *Aquatics*, *Gymnastics* and *Adventure Education* as part of the student learning experience.
- All Junior Cycle Physical Education plans and related documents are maintained in a shared, online planning platform, and also in hard copy. The current online platform does not allow for key learning to be extracted from a selection of learning outcomes. It is advised that the platform be adjusted to allow for more flexible, collaborative planning online.
- Minutes of departmental meetings are recorded. The minutes indicate that the teachers are committed to continuing professional development and engage in very good dialogue with school management.

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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes this P.E. inspection and its endorsement of our high-quality teaching and learning. As the report indicates, we do value our learner experience and encourage students to work together positively at all levels of educational attainment. The P.E. Department does understand the importance of students being pro-active and reflecting upon their learning. The best use is made of the resources available. We work actively with Sligo Sports Partnership and are developing this relationship further. The P.E. Department does prepare and plan carefully to meet curricular needs and we will continue to develop Physical Education strategically in St. Mary's College.

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

- Building on our strong Junior Cycle curriculum, as identified in the inspection, we are expanding our Physical Education capacity. As noted in the report, TY students are scheduled for 80 minutes of Leisure Studies a week and also participate in the G.A.A. Future Leaders programme. As enrolment increases it is hoped to expand P.E. classes throughout the school up until 6th Year. In the meantime, opportunities are being created in Senior Cycle on a modular basis: at present 5th and 6th Years have access to a Basketball module during school time. Senior Cycle students also have opportunities to play sport competitively at points during the year. We will work to create other Physical Education opportunities in a creative way in and outside school for all our students. We are looking at operating a "Run for Fun" programme this year which facilitate students across the school building up to a 5km run capacity. We believe a strong physical activity culture in the school will be a foundation for future Wellbeing and Physical Education planning.
- The Board of Management has secured funding to work on the courts area to the rear of the school. This will bring new opportunities and enhance the facilities we have. It is hoped that we will make these available to the local community. This development will be progressed next year. In addition, the Parents' Association is raising funds for school sports equipment and new equipment will be purchased in January 2020. Moving forward, we would plan to improve our facilities further each year.

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
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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
Good	Good 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
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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
Fair	Fair 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
Weak	Weak 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;