

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Finian's Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Swords County Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70120F

Date of Inspection: 17-05-2017



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. 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.

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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	17-05-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Saint Finian's Community College is co-educational secondary school under the auspices of the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board, with a current enrolment of 272 girls and 323 boys. The school provides the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied programmes as well as an optional Transition Year (TY).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- Teacher observation and effective questioning were the main assessment practices used to support students' learning; currently, there is no formalised method to assess and report on students' practical performance in Physical Education (PE).
- The activities, as planned by the PE department, cater for the majority of students; however, there is room for further differentiation to meet the needs of all students.
- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support for PE is satisfactory; some senior-cycle students do not have access to the subject.
- On occasion, different year groups have been timetabled for the sports hall concurrently; this practice reduces the breadth and depth of the curricular experience for students.
- The quality of planning and preparation is good with schemes of work based on five modules a year; however, time pressure means that the final module is cut short on a frequent basis.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The PE department should plan for further differentiation in both the tasks and worksheets that are used in lessons.
- The assessment plan for each year group should be developed further by the PE department to include a formal practical performance assessment task.
- Senior management should ensure that all students have access to a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week, and that instances of concurrent timetabling are reduced where possible.
- The PE department should review the current physical education programme with a view to expanding all schemes of work to cover four modules per year and investigating the options that might form part of a broader senior-cycle programme.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of observed teaching and learning was good; there were some instances of very good practice noted.
- Students were provided with opportunities to work individually and in small groups thereby facilitating them to take ownership and responsibility for their own learning. In one lesson, multiple opportunities for student leadership were provided through the Sports Education curriculum model. To enhance this approach, students could be asked to lead various stages of the lesson, such as warm-up or cool-down, on occasion.
- Very effective practice was observed during a junior-cycle athletics lesson where the teacher shared the success criteria with the students prior to an activity. Students had an opportunity to observe their peers attempting a skill and provided feedback to their peers based on the success criteria identified.
- High-quality questioning was a key element of the majority of lessons observed. During the stretching phase, students were asked to demonstrate stretches for a specific muscle. Appropriate wait-time was used during the skill phase as students were challenged to apply their knowledge to practical situations and to predict outcomes. The reinforcement of technical language in all year groups provided a significant aid to student learning.
- Teacher observation was used throughout lessons to support the continuous assessment of students. Appropriate feedback was given to individual students to help improve performance.
- High levels of activity and student engagement were observed in the majority of lessons. During some lessons, there was scope to further differentiate activities and worksheets to maximise student engagement.
- Literacy was well supported through the use of key words, paired reading and opportunities to develop oral literacy in the majority of lessons. However, opportunities to support the development of student' numeracy skills were lacking in most lessons. Teachers should develop classroom practices that support students' numeracy development.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support for PE is satisfactory.
- Timetabling is good at junior cycle and TY with all students having access to a double period of PE. However, in senior cycle, students may choose to study LCVP instead of participating in PE. Senior management should ensure, as a matter of priority, that all students have access to a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week.
- On occasion, different year groups have been concurrently timetabled for the sports hall. This practice reduces the breadth and depth of the curricular experience that students receive as the space available is shared between groups undertaking different activities. Senior management should consult with the PE department to reduce the occurrence of concurrent timetabling as much as possible in order to ensure the best possible student experience.

- A broad range of extra-curricular activities, including both team sports and individual pursuits, is available to students. The commitment to the provision of extra-curricular activities by both staff and management is commended.
- Adequate facilities, including a full sized sports hall, are available for PE. Consideration should be given to planning a phased updating of the fitness area to cater for the interests of senior-cycle students. Planning is underway to provide for additional outdoor PE facilities.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is good. A comprehensive subject department plan for junior cycle is in place. TY has been introduced for the first time this year and the planning for senior-cycle PE will evolve as this programme develops.
- Schemes of work are based on providing five different modules each year in junior cycle; however, time pressure means the final module is cut short frequently. The number of modules provided in junior cycle should be reduced. In addition, a review of the senior-cycle programme should be undertaken to ensure a broad range of curricular experiences is provided.
- Individual lessons were very well planned with a range of learning experiences prepared to engage students in their learning. The use of the Sport Education curriculum model in a senior-cycle lesson provided valuable opportunities for students to take ownership of their own learning.
- Good records of student attendance and participation in lessons are maintained by the PE teachers. This information is used to report to parents formally in Christmas and end-of-year written reports. It is recommended that a culminating assessment event, where students' physical performance can be evaluated formally, be incorporated also into the assessment plan for at least one block of work each year.

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 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
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;