

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Coláiste Mhuirlinne/Merlin College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	C/O Galway-Roscommon ETB Doughiska Road Galway County Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76096S

Date of Inspection: 28-02-2020



**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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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

Dates of inspection	27 – 28 February 2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers of Physical Education• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons (two 80-minute lessons and two 40-minute lessons)• Examination of students' learning• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers of Physical Education

School context

Coláiste Mhuirinne/Merlin College is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board. The school provides the Junior Certificate programme, the compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme. Current enrolment stands at 623. Among the supports for students are three special classes, sanctioned by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), for students with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) and moderate general learning disability

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Physical Education is highly valued by teachers and the senior management team as a key component to the development of a holistic school culture of physical activity for health and positive behaviours; there are exemplary links between the physical education curricular learning experiences and the extensive extra-curricular physical activity experiences provided by all staff.
- Learning was good overall in observed lessons, ranging from excellent learner outcomes to fair; the depth of implementation of the physical education curriculum and some health and safety aspects need to be addressed.
- Overall teaching practices are good and assessment practices are satisfactory; peer and self-assessment activities and working-together strategies needed to be improved in some lessons.
- A highly supportive learning relationship was observed in individual and mainstream integrated physical education lessons for students in the special class, and there were good inclusive practices in mainstream lessons with differentiation by equipment and oral feedback being strengths.
- Whole-school provision and support are good, with scope to further develop the provision for audio-visual technology and curricular content.
- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation is good, based on mostly very good individually-planned programme plans; the collaborative functioning of the subject department is an area for development.

Recommendations

- Formative assessment practices, including the co-creation of success criteria to support peer and self-assessment and advanced working-together strategies such as “Jigsaw”, should be developed by all teachers of Physical Education.

- All qualified teachers of Physical Education should participate in subject department meetings to share experience and expertise.
- The subject department should collectively progress a number of key areas in the short term including strand-specific warm-up planning, engaging in continuing professional development (CPD) to deepen knowledge of key skills in *Gymnastics*, and the creation of a comprehensive LCA *Leisure and Recreation* plan.
- In the medium term, teachers and senior management should agree an action plan for improving physical education curricular content delivery to include the provision of audio-visual technology and *Aquatics*, in line with the age and developmental stage of the students.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The student experience was respectful and positive with an excellent relationship and rapport evident in all lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching is good; practice was very good in half of lessons observed and satisfactory or fair in all other lessons. Evidence of the impact of school self-evaluation on collective practice was observed, with extension tasks integrated effectively into all physical education lessons. Learning intentions were shared and reviewed in all lessons, however, the depth of engagement with the learning intentions and the design of the learning tasks to progress student learning towards the learning intentions were areas for improvement.
- The overall quality of learning was good, with excellent learner outcomes observed in one lesson and good, satisfactory or fair in all other lessons. There is scope to improve the depth of implementation of the physical education curriculum and some health and safety aspects.
- In the best lessons, there was a very strong sense of purpose and urgency, with students organising the equipment and engaging independently in tasks which provided choice. There was clear lesson structure with an introductory, development and review phase. In a significant minority of lessons, however, the routine associated with the preparation and the timely beginning of physical education lessons had scope for improvement.
- In a few lessons, the warm-ups observed were not specific to the learning focus. All warm-ups should be specific to the focus of the unit of learning. All students should be taught a specific warm up for *Gymnastics*, as a matter of health and safety. Senior management reported that they will support all teachers to access CPD in relation to *Gymnastics*.
- Inclusive practices in mainstream lessons are good with differentiation by equipment, task and oral feedback being strengths. In a few instances, the student experience was limited by teacher-led activities and random grouping of students. Teachers should allocate students to mixed-ability, co-educational groups, with a maximum of four students in each group, for the duration of a unit of learning.
- Assessment practice is satisfactory overall. In half of lessons, the teacher provided the success criteria prior to self and peer-assessment activities. Some students had opportunities to observe their peers attempting a skill and provided feedback to them based on the success criteria identified. The deep learning observed during these instances was

noteworthy. It is advised to share best practice in the co-creation of success criteria and to implement formative assessment activities such as 'Jigsaw', as outlined in the subject department plan, across all lessons.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, whole-school provision and support are good. All four teachers of Physical Education hold a qualification recognised by the Teaching Council and all students are timetabled for at least eighty minutes of Physical Education per week.
- The exemplary links between the physical education curricular learning experiences and the extensive extra-curricular physical activity experiences provided by all staff were lauded by students in discussion with the inspector. The students provided excellent examples from *Athletics* and *Invasion Games* where the curricular learning experience had encouraged them to extend their learning in the extra-curricular programme.
- Currently, Wi-Fi and a trolley of laptops are available for use in Physical Education. Going forward, mobile devices with audio-visual capacity, a projector and a laptop will be needed to further support teaching, learning and assessment in Physical Education.
- On-site physical education facilities consist of a state-of-the-art hall, fitness suite and outdoor courts. In addition, the school has access to Merlin Woods Park, located adjacent to the school, providing grass pitches, tennis courts and an athletics track. The students reported a need for additional athletics equipment to build on their good learning experiences to date. The gymnastics equipment should be stored in the physical education hall store so as to provide better ease of access. Senior management should implement a short, medium and long-term plan for the increase of all equipment.
- A highly supportive learning relationship was observed in individual and mainstream lessons for students in the special class. Learning experiences during the inspection included health-related fitness and aquatics. The students in the special class also reported enjoyable learning experiences in horse-riding; this is indicative of an effective and varied programme in response to student needs.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation is good, based on mostly very good individually planned programme plans. The collaborative functioning of the subject department is an area for development.
- The junior cycle plan is very good, with detailed units of learning. However, junior-cycle students reported that they have no learning experiences in *Dance*, *Aquatics* and *Outdoor and Adventure*.
- The TY plan for the subject is very good. Commendably, the programme includes a unit of learning in *Aquatics* and provides for a varied learning experience with the inclusion of the GAA Future Leaders programme and a myriad of physical activities, such as hill-walking and Outdoor and Adventure trips.
- LCA planning for the subject is fair; the current under-developed plan needs to incorporate units of learning that reflect learner experiences and outcomes, and planned assessment moments.

- Collaborative practice is satisfactory overall with scope for improvement in terms of department planning meetings. Going forward, it is important that all teachers of Physical Education participate in subject department meetings in order to share experience and expertise, as this is not the case currently.

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 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;