

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ashbourne Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Deerpark Ashbourne County Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91495T

Date of Inspection: 29-03-2017



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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	29-03-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principals and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ashbourne Community School is a co-educational secondary school which operates under the joint patronage of Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB) and the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school has an enrolment of 1068 students in the current school year. In addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school offers an optional Transition Year programme (TY), Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) to its students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good; there were some instances of very good practice observed.
- Collaborative and reflective practices are strongly embedded in the culture of the physical education department; this is clearly evidenced in the well-developed assessment practices in use.
- The facilities and resources available for the teaching of Physical Education are very good.
- While subject provision is good at junior cycle and in TY, some fifth-year and sixth-year students do not have access to the subject as they must choose between Physical Education and LCVP.
- Long-term subject planning is well developed within the physical education department; however, planning and delivery of the programme at senior cycle does not provide for all students to experience all curricular areas.
- The short duration of four-week blocks of work in junior cycle Physical Education is limiting the opportunities to develop self-directed autonomous learning experiences.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students in fifth and sixth year should be provided with a minimum of a double-period of Physical Education per week for the full school year.
- A review of the current senior-cycle physical education programme should be undertaken with a view to maximising teacher input in all curricular areas.
- The duration of blocks of work at junior-cycle level should be extended to a minimum of six weeks for each topic.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching observed during the evaluation was good; there were some instances of very good practice observed.
- The quality of learning was good in all lessons observed as students engaged enthusiastically in worthwhile learning activities. The disappointment expressed by third-year students during their review of a four-week block of work indicates a longer duration would further deepen their learning experience.
- High levels of activity and student engagement were observed in the majority of lessons. During some lessons there was scope, particularly during skill-development sections, for higher levels of student activity. When planning lessons, teachers should give consideration to how activity levels can be maximised during the lesson.
- Questioning, as an assessment strategy, was used frequently and appropriately in the majority of lessons observed. Student responses indicate a high level of understanding of the topic at hand.
- Very good practice was observed in a junior games lesson where students designed and led their own warm-up activities. Further opportunities to provide student leadership experiences within lessons should be considered for all year groups.
- Good classroom routines have been established and these were a significant aid to efficient lesson management. Students assisted readily in setting up and storing of equipment at the start and end of lessons and co-operated fully with their teachers throughout.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support is good. All junior-cycle and TY students have access to a double period of Physical Education.
- In senior cycle, students may choose to study LCVP as an additional subject instead of participating in Physical Education. It is recommended as a matter of priority that all students have access to a minimum of a double period of Physical Education for the full school year.
- The facilities available for the teaching of Physical Education are very good and are well maintained. Appropriate resources for a wide range of curricular areas are available and the subject department is well supported by school management.
- A very good range of extra-curricular activities is available. Team sports such as basketball, Gaelic football, soccer and rugby, as well as individual pursuits like athletics, judo and golf, are provided by a dedicated team of teacher volunteers. Whole-school activities, for example Active Schools Week and the annual 5km Run, are also coordinated by the physical education teachers. This commitment to providing extra-curricular experiences is greatly valued by school management.
- The physical education teachers demonstrate a strong commitment to continuous professional development. Teachers have attended Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) conferences and resources from these events have been shared within the department. Collaborative and reflective practices are strongly embedded in the culture of this physical education department.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of overall subject planning is good. However, the range of activities planned at senior cycle should be reviewed to ensure that all students can experience all curricular areas under the guidance of a qualified physical education teacher.
- Detailed schemes of work have been documented for each year group. These well-developed plans include differentiated learning outcomes, assessment strategies and reference to the development of literacy and numeracy for each topic.
- Individual lessons were very well prepared with appropriate handouts and worksheet material available to support students' learning. Information and communication technology was used to good effect in a senior games lesson to illustrate tactical positioning; this greatly added to the students' learning experience.
- Good records of students' attendance and participation in physical education lessons are maintained and these are used to inform reporting to parents. Personal-fitness profiles are being developed for all students and practical assessments are included in many of the curricular areas. Methods to formalise the inclusion of these very good assessment practices into subject reporting should be enhanced.

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

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes this very positive report and acknowledges the high quality of learning, planning, participation and assessment in Physical Education. It notes the importance of student voice in the Physical Education department's planning (e.g. senior-cycle) and teaching and learning (e.g. reflective wall) and wishes to highlight that the disappointment observed by the inspector in Section 1 of the report reflects, in fact, the high level of engagement and enjoyment experienced by the 3rd year students during their four-week block. The current four-week blocks at junior-cycle are currently being trialled on the basis of comprehensive feedback offered by students last year and the duration of these blocks is currently under review by the Physical Education department.

Area 2: 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 review the subject provision at senior cycle and in collaboration with the Physical Education department will work towards implementing the inspector's recommendations. As noted above the duration of the blocks of work at junior-cycle is being trialled and will be reviewed at the end of the year in preparation for planning subsequent modules/blocks of work for this year group.

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;