An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT

Clonkeen College
Clonkeen Road, Blackrock, County Dublin
Roll number: 60092U

Date of inspection: 23 September 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</td>
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<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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• Review of relevant documents
• Discussion with principal and teachers
• Interaction with students

MAIN FINDINGS

• Lessons observed had a strong commitment to student engagement and had high levels of physical activity.
• Management is proactive and highly committed to the provision of better facilities for the delivery of the physical education and extra-curricular programmes.
• There is limited or no access to Physical Education for students in some year groups.
• Students’ participation in extra-curricular activities is well supported and valued by the school.
• Good progress has been made in developing a subject plan; however there is an over-emphasis on games in the planned programmes of work.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• Management should ensure that the time allocation and timetable arrangements are suitable to optimise all students’ participation in Physical Education, and that teachers deployed are appropriately qualified to teach the subject.
• Teachers should give careful attention to differentiating for ability, to the organisation and structure of learning tasks and to the greater use of pedagogical strategies appropriate to the physical education setting.
• The types of physical activities planned for each year group should be expanded, insofar as resources permit, to reflect the seven strands of the syllabus.
• The further development of a systematic approach to the assessment process should be undertaken.
INTRODUCTION

Clonkeen College is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 520 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate. 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There were elements of good practice in each of the lessons observed, with a number of areas for improvement also identified.
- Teachers introduced the topic and outlined the structure of the lesson. This good practice should be extended to also include the key learning outcomes in order to provide students with a clear focus for their learning.
- Lessons were characterised by high levels of application by students to all of the assigned tasks. There was also a very good commitment to ensuring high levels of physical activity for the full duration of lessons. Students were well behaved and co-operative throughout, with very good adherence to all of the instructions given by their teachers. A positive and supportive rapport has been established between students and their teachers.
- While warm-up activities were undertaken in all lessons, teachers should reconsider the structure of these initial activities to differentiate for the varying levels of skill and fitness within the class group. In addition, opportunities should be provided, where appropriate, for students to lead their peers in some or all elements of the warm-up.
- Skill development was enhanced through the effective use of demonstration, which provided students with a visual reference for the successful execution of the focused exercises and skills. This approach was most successful when accompanied by teaching points to provide students with kinaesthetic cues on how to complete the skill or exercise. To enhance this practice, the use of peer-assisted learning should be considered, where appropriate.
- Opportunities for skill development and application were reduced when inappropriate group sizes resulted in an inadequate work-to-rest ratio. When organising skill acquisition tasks, careful consideration should be given to optimising the number of opportunities for students to practice. In addition, the use of the Teaching Games for Understanding approach should be considered to ensure that skill application is appropriately contextualised to the game setting.
- Students’ engagement and learning, during the lessons on circuit training, would have benefitted further by the use of task cards. These should be developed and used to provide students with the key performance indicators to assist their learning and performance.
- Limited use was made of questioning as a means of assessing or engaging students in the learning process. The use of appropriately framed and differentiated questions should be a core element of all physical education lessons.
- The single period lesson observed was restrictive on the depth of students’ learning experiences in comparison with that of the double period lessons.
• Good records are maintained of students’ attendance and participation in their physical education lessons. Further efforts should be made and strategies developed to constructively include students who are unable to participate in the physical activities.

• The assessment process should be developed to ensure that students retain a record of their engagement and learning in Physical Education. A range of approaches to assessment and a number of key assessment milestones should be established for each year group in line with the identified learning outcomes. Existing elements, such as a record of participation and personal profiles, should be further expanded to include attainment targets for each of the elements of the programme and the completion of key assignments.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

• The current timetable provision for Physical Education and arrangements for student access to the subject at third year, fifth year and sixth year should be revisited. Management should work towards providing the subject in line with the recommendations of the Department, with at least one double period per week for all students.

• While there is a good commitment to the delivery of the physical education programme in the school, management should ensure that all teachers deployed to teach the subject are appropriately qualified.

• Recent investments in upgrading the school’s playing pitches, along with the planned development of an extensive indoor complex, will greatly enhance the infrastructure available for the delivery of the physical education, physical activity and sports’ programmes. The strategic vision of the board of management and senior management to the realisation of this project and the commitment of staff is exemplary.

• There is an adequate range of equipment to support the delivery of the planned programmes of work. A comprehensive health and safety audit should be undertaken to include all elements of the organisation, delivery and participation in the physical education programme.

• Good links have been made with local community sports clubs to share facilities that enhance students’ physical activity experiences and support the delivery of the schools’ extra-curricular sports programme.

• The commitment and dedication of staff in organising and delivering the schools’ extra-curricular programme is commended. In addition, the organisation and implementation of several initiatives such as healthy eating, the Gaisce awards, school sports day and intra-class and inter-class leagues provide valuable opportunities for students to apply their learning and develop positive health-enhancing attitudes and behaviours.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• Some progress has been made in the development of a subject plan for the organisation and delivery of Physical Education in the school.

• The nature of activities for TY students ensures that they receive a broad range of experiences and opportunities to participate in physical activities within their own community.

• There is significant scope for the further development of the programmes of work for each year group. To build on the work undertaken to date, the physical education department should identify the key learning outcomes for each year group, and develop detailed
programme plans that align the intended learning outcomes with the learning experiences, resources and modes of assessment for each activity module. The nature of the activities in the programme for junior cycle students includes an over-emphasis on games and this should be revisited to provide a broad and balanced programme relevant to the interests and needs of all students.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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