

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT**

**Catholic University School,
Leeson Street Lower, Dublin 2
Roll number: 60540V**

Date of inspection: 17 October 2014



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	16 & 17 October 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two physical education lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching in Physical Education varied from fair to good in the lessons observed, with some elements of very good practice noted.
- Lessons promoted high levels of moderate-to-vigorous intensity physical activity.
- Students participated with enthusiasm and many demonstrated good levels of proficiency in the focused activities.
- The generous timetable provision and arrangements facilitate access to the off-campus facilities and ensure students have sufficient time for meaningful engagement.
- There is an exemplary approach taken to fostering a physical activity culture and healthy lifestyles in the school.
- Subject department planning for the organisation and delivery of the physical education programme is underdeveloped and there is a need to plan for greater coherence with the established games programme.
- Assessment of students' learning is limited and mostly focused on the development of activity-specific skills or levels of physical fitness.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should extend the range of methodologies employed in lessons, including the greater use of questioning, instructional models and co-operative learning strategies.
- Management should review the optional nature of the subject in fifth and sixth year to ensure all students engage in Physical Education.
- Management should ensure the programmes of work are appropriately aligned to curricular and syllabus objectives and are delivered by appropriately qualified teachers.
- The physical education and games teachers should work collaboratively to plan and deliver a coherent programme of work for each year group, based on agreed educational learning outcomes and assessment tasks.

INTRODUCTION

Catholic University School is a fee-paying voluntary secondary school for boys with a current enrolment of 445 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching varied from fair to good in the physical education lessons observed, with some elements of very good practice noted. There is scope to further develop the range of methodologies used in lessons.
- Students' participation levels were good in the lessons observed. However, when some students are unable to participate in Physical Education they remain in the school to complete prescribed work. This practice should be reconsidered with a view to engaging these students in non-physically challenging roles such as coaching, officiating or organisational tasks, commensurate with their ability on the day. In this way, such students will continue to be meaningfully included in the physical education process.
- Lessons began with a general overview of the planned content. In some instances, the learning intentions were established and expressed in terms of what students should know and be able to do. This practice should be extended to all lessons to provide tangible goals for students and to focus their attention and efforts.
- Tasks set involved students participating at a moderate-to-vigorous intensity for extended periods. Students applied themselves well and responded positively and enthusiastically to all tasks. Many students demonstrated good levels of proficiency and physical fitness to sustain their engagement in the focused activities.
- Initial warm-up activities incorporated a variety of locomotion and range-of-motion activities. All of these tasks were teacher directed. Consideration should be given to devolving some responsibility to students to design and lead their peers in general or activity-specific warm-ups and also for other elements of their lessons.
- The range of instructional methodologies used by teachers varied. Technical instruction was more effective when it provided students with the verbal and visual cues to support their understanding. Best practice was observed when students were involved in self and peer-assessment tasks, were required to apply a tactical concept, or to apply specific criteria to enhance their biomechanical efficiency.
- When used, questioning was effective to deepen understanding and engage students' cognitively. However, this is an area for further development as the frequency and focus of questions was limited.
- The greater use of co-operative learning strategies is also recommended. This may involve students leading their peers in elements of their lesson or applying established criteria to assess and provide feedback to improve each other's performances.
- To augment the strong focus on skill acquisition in games lessons, consideration should be given to adopting elements of the Games-for-Understanding instructional model. Together with co-operative learning strategies, these approaches should devolve greater responsibility to students for their learning, enhance their ability to analyse and interpret movement and to improve their skill and performance.
- Good records are maintained of students' participation in their lessons.

- The current approach to assessment is limited to mostly assessing students' skills in a particular activity and levels of physical fitness. Assessment of students' learning should also include knowledge of relevant concepts, principles and strategies as applied to a study of human movement as well as students' generic movement competencies. The implementation of an agreed approach to assessment by all teachers should now be advanced. A number of integrated tasks should be identified for each year group to assess students' achievement of the agreed learning outcomes. All students' progress and learning in Physical Education should also be reported to parents.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The on-site facilities for Physical Education and physical activity are limited and impose some unique restrictions to the provision of the subject and extra-curricular activities. To overcome this the trustees have made a substantial investment in developing an excellent off-site sports pavilion and playing pitches. Management has also made a number of key decisions about curricular organisation and the deployment of staff to optimise students' access and engagement in the planned programmes.
- The combined time provision for Physical Education and games for each of the junior cycle and the TY year groups is broadly in line with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills. However, the optional nature of participation for fifth-year and sixth-year students should be reviewed.
- As games is one element of a comprehensive physical education programme, rather than a stand-alone curricular area, management should ensure that it is appropriately aligned with the overall aims of the curriculum.
- Physical Education is currently provided by two teachers who are appropriately qualified in the subject. A games master along with a team of additional teachers and coaches are also involved in providing aspects of the games and strength and conditioning programmes. The commitment and enthusiasm of these teachers and coaches to promoting sport, physical activity and positive lifestyle choices is acknowledged. However, it is best practice that all teachers delivering instruction in the curriculum are appropriately qualified in the subject.
- Excellent efforts have been made by management, teachers and coaches to promote a physical activity culture. In addition to the formal curricular programmes, students are provided with many opportunities to participate and progress their ability in a range of extra-curricular sports and physical activities. Of particular note is the recognition and acknowledgement of students' participation, commitment and achievements, through the school's prize giving ceremonies, exchange programmes and scholarships.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- While all elements of the organisation and delivery of the physical education and games programmes are documented, the subject plan is underdeveloped. It is recommended that greater coherence be established across all programmes of work for each year group. All members of the physical education and games department should identify and agree the intended learning outcomes for each year group and align these with a number of relevant assessment events or rich tasks. This will ensure that an integrated and incremental approach is taken towards supporting students in achieving these outcomes.

- Consideration should be given to undertaking a review of students' attitudes and opinion of their programme and learning experiences. This data could then be used as a basis to inform programme planning and to track and monitor its effectiveness over time.
- It is commendable that policies and procedures for dealing with injuries, including concussion, have been developed, along with general health and safety procedures. To build on this work, a risk assessment audit of the various activities and playing environments should also be undertaken and included in the subject plan.

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

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 the acknowledgement of

- the generous timetable provision and arrangements that facilitate Physical Education,
- the exemplary approach that is taken to fostering a physical activity culture and healthy lifestyle in the school,
- and the substantial investment that the Trustees had made in developing an excellent off-site sports pavilion and playing pitches.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

In order to consider how the recommendations made in the report can be taken up, a consultation process will take place with both the games staff and the PE staff to consider how co-ordination between the various staff can be enhanced and the provision of physical education in the school can better meet the needs of the students. It is proposed also, as the report recommends, to review the students attitudes and opinion of their programme and learning experiences as part of a review of provision.