

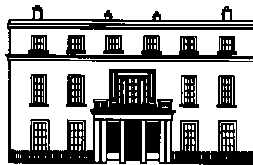
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education  
REPORT**

**North Monastery Secondary School  
North Monastery Road, Cork  
Roll number: 62530F**

**Date of inspection: 7 and 8 October 2014**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	7 and 8 October 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Meeting with subject co-ordinator</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the inspection was good and individual lessons were well planned.
- There is no formal assessment or reporting of students' achievement in Physical Education in place.
- Formal lessons in Physical Education take place in first and second year only and a limited range of activities is offered to these students.
- The facilities available for the teaching and learning of Physical Education are good and the subject is well resourced in the school.
- There is currently only one physical education teacher on staff involved in the teaching of the subject. Two other teachers, who do not hold physical education qualifications, are also involved in the teaching of the subject.
- Subject department planning is very weak and no vision has been articulated for the future development of the subject.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Physical Education should be offered to all students in all year groups in line with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills *Rules and Programmes 2004-2005*.
  - A comprehensive review and planning process should be undertaken for the subject to include short, medium and long-term goals, strategies for teaching, assessment and reporting, and for the delivery of a broad and balanced range of activities for students.
  - Lessons in Physical Education should only be taken by teachers who hold teaching qualifications recognised by the Teaching Council for the teaching of the subject.
  - Regular department meetings should take place to review progress and to ensure that best health and safety practices are followed at all times.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

The North Monastery Secondary School is an all-boys school with a current enrolment of 382 students situated on the north side of Cork city. The school has a long-established educational tradition in the area, dating back over 200 years. The school is part of the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan and offers the established Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- In the lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good.
- Lessons benefited from good quality preparation and there was a coherent structure to the tasks set for students.
- The warm-up phase of lessons generally achieved its purpose in raising students' heart rates and getting them mentally and physically prepared for more vigorous activity. A more gradual increase in students' effort levels was suggested in order to reduce the risk of lactic-acid induced discomfort, particularly among students whose level of fitness is low.
- Stretching and mobility exercises were performed as a routine part of the warm-up phase of lessons and teachers provided useful information to students on the names of muscles being stretched at this time. The cool-down phase of lessons was well-utilised to recap on learning that had taken place and, in one instance, to inform students as to how learning would be extended in subsequent lessons. Such practice is commended as it helps students to contextualise learning and can assist them in reflecting on the learning experience.
- High quality demonstrations by teachers were a significant aid to students' understanding during the skills phases of lessons. There was, however, some scope for greater use of student demonstrations in order to affirm good practice and provide motivation and encouragement to weaker students.
- Teachers intervened as required to assist students who were experiencing difficulty by providing individual assistance and affirmed students' efforts appropriately.
- Teacher questioning included a range of higher-order and lower-order questions and, although general questioning was more evident, some directed questioning also took place.
- Lessons typically concluded with a games session where students had the opportunity to consolidate learning during a conditioned or full game. The quality of students' performances during these games varied but was generally good, particularly in small-sided games where smaller student numbers allowed more opportunity for skill development.
- Classroom management was positive and students participated enthusiastically, particularly in the games phases of lessons. Suggestions were offered with regard to the management of some students who were inattentive or were not on task, but such incidents were infrequent and lessons were a positive experience for students overall.

- There is a need to include more opportunities for self-assessment, peer assessment and teacher assessment during lessons to consolidate and affirm the learning that is taking place. The use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies is recommended in this regard.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- At present, first year and second year students are timetabled for a double period of Physical Education each week. Physical Education is not timetabled for any other year groups. This is a significant deficit in the school's provision for the subject. It is strongly recommended that Physical Education be timetabled for all year groups in line with the recommendations of the *Rules and Programmes 2004-2005*: Department of Education and Skills.
- The school has a long-standing and proud tradition in sport and physical activity, most notably in hurling and Gaelic football. Other areas of extracurricular activity that are currently provided include basketball and athletics. The school and its teachers are commended for the provision of these activities as they can form the basis of a lifelong interest and involvement in sport and physical activity for many students.
- There are currently no formal whole-school assessment practices in place in Physical Education in the school. This needs to be addressed and students' learning in Physical Education should be reported to parents through formal written reports at least once per year and also through parent-teacher meetings.
- The facilities available for the teaching of the subject are good, comprising a well-maintained hall, a grass pitch and small hard court area. The subject department is well-resourced, although the provision of volleyball nets would be of benefit to the teaching of this topic.
- The school has one qualified physical education teacher on staff. The timetabling of Physical Education to all year groups, as recommended, may well require the recruitment of an additional physical education teacher and the school is encouraged consider this within available resources.
- In addition to the school's qualified physical education teacher, there are two other teachers timetabled for the teaching of the subject. Although these teachers are enthusiastic and committed to making a positive contribution to students' health and well-being, the fact they do not hold physical education qualifications recognised by the Teaching Council for the teaching of the subject means that they should not be timetabled to take physical education lessons. While these two teachers have a background in physical activity, they cannot be expected to have the same breadth of knowledge and expertise as a qualified physical education teacher in a wide range of physical activity areas. This results in a narrowing of the learning experience for students in favour of invasion games and means that there are key areas of activity which cannot be provided.
- While it must be pointed out that no unsafe practices were observed during the inspection, there may be an increased health and safety risk to students in the school in lessons which are taken by the teachers without physical education qualifications. Although the experience and background that these teachers have, particularly with regard to Gaelic games, helps to reduce any potential risk, they may not have the same depth of knowledge and understanding of potential health and safety risks associated with physical activity as a qualified physical education teacher would be expected to have.

Bearing the above in mind, it is strongly recommended that all physical education lessons are taken only by qualified physical education teachers.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject planning documentation available for inspection was very limited and focused on a brief outline of the aims and objectives of the department together with a summary of activities planned for delivery. This range of activities is narrower than it should be with small amounts of athletics and health-related activity and an over-emphasis on team games evident. Although games is a core part of any balanced physical education curriculum, students should also be exposed to activities such as gymnastics, adventure activities, aquatics and dance in order to ensure a balanced experience in Physical Education.
- A comprehensive subject department planning process should be commenced in order to re-invigorate the subject. This should include, but should not be limited to, the outlining of short, medium and long-term goals, strategies for teaching, assessment and reporting and for the delivery of a broad and balanced range of activities for students. A range of resource materials is available to guide this process, most notably as part of the Department of Education and Skills school self-evaluation (SSE) initiative, the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) and through teacher professional networks and regional meetings of the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI).
- Regular subject department meetings, once per term at a minimum, should take place to evaluate and review progress and these meetings should be minuted. In the short term, the meetings should also address good health and safety practices in Physical Education.
- Planning for individual lessons was good. Lessons observed had clear aims and benefited from a coherent, logical structure. Teachers maintain records of students' attendance and participation.

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