An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT

Coláiste Na Maighdine
Cannon Street,
Waterford
Roll number: 64970U

Date of inspection: 05 December 2014
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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MAIN FINDINGS

• Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the physical education lessons observed was very good.

• An inclusive and supportive learning atmosphere ensured high levels of active participation and learning in the lessons observed.

• The timetable arrangements, facilities, resources and highly committed teachers support the successful implementation of the physical education programmes.

• An exemplary approach is taken, through the curricular and extra-curricular programmes, to support students in developing positive attitudes and physical activity behaviours.

• A comprehensive subject plan informs all aspects of the organisation and delivery of Physical Education.

• The physical education programmes, including an excellent TY programme, are planned and organised to a very high standard and provide a broad and balanced range of learning experiences.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• In addition to developing sport-specific skills, teachers should also consider a greater focus on the development of students’ functional and fundamental movement competencies and kinaesthetic awareness.

• To further enhance the existing assessment process, the subject department should identify a small number of assessment tasks that capture students’ achievement of identified learning outcomes.
INTRODUCTION
Coláiste Na Maighdine is a voluntary secondary school for girls, with a current enrolment of 437 students. It provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of learning and teaching in the lessons observed was very good.

- Exemplary efforts are made by the subject teachers to create an inspiring, stimulating and motivating learning environment. The display of action photographs, along with relevant key words, terms and concepts related to physical activity, fitness and sport, positively contribute to students’ participation and learning.

- All lessons had a very good atmosphere and were characterised by positive and affirming interactions. Very good attention was paid to ensuring students were actively engaged in their lessons, including those with additional needs. When used, music provided a motivating stimulus for movement, and was obviously enjoyed by students.

- Lessons observed were well structured and paced. The content of lessons was appropriately contextualised and learning intentions were established with students at the outset. The use of video clips, displayed through the built-in information and communication technology (ICT) facility, provided students with relevant exemplars of the criteria and standards relevant to the applied tasks.

- Initial warm-up activities were appropriately paced and ensured students were physiologically prepared for subsequent tasks. During the warm-up phase, good attention was paid to highlighting basic anatomy and there was effective use of relevant vocabulary by teachers and students. Very good practice was observed in some instances where the initial warm-up activities encouraged students to develop their underlying body management and locomotion skills relevant to the activity. A more explicit focus on developing students’ functional and fundamental movement competencies should be considered by all teachers.

- The quality of teacher demonstration was excellent. Tasks set had good progressions identified to promote skill acquisition and application to the game setting, where relevant. Teachers made good use of relevant teaching points to promote skill acquisition and to provide both visual and verbal cues to enhance students’ understanding.

- Teachers ensured tasks provided students with sufficient moderate-to-vigorous physical activity and were open-ended, which helped to differentiate for the varying levels of motor ability and fitness of students. This was particularly evident for some exercises in the health-related fitness circuit, where students were provided with options from which to choose their preferred level of physical challenge. Similarly, the use of conditioned games ensured students of varying abilities were meaningfully included in the applied tasks.
Some opportunities were provided for students to demonstrate drills or exercises and to analyse their partners’ performances. The further use of co-operative learning strategies should be developed and incorporated into lessons, whenever appropriate.

Very good records are maintained of students’ attendance and participation in their physical education lessons. Students’ progress is reported regularly to parents.

The development of a comprehensive assessment process in Physical Education is advancing well. The use of a key assignment in TY, based on clear criteria, is a good example of how students’ learning may be captured over the duration of a defined time period. To build on this good work, a number of key assessment tasks should be identified to capture students’ attainment of key learning outcomes for each year group.

**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Physical Education is a valued subject on the curriculum, which is reflected in the timetable provision and level of management support. It is commendable that all students are provided with a minimum of one double period per week.

- The physical education department comprises three committed and conscientious teachers, all of whom are graduates of the subject. A proactive approach is taken to continuing professional learning with engagement in a range of relevant courses and conferences.

- The school has very good facilities to support students’ participation in Physical Education and the extra-curricular programmes. The refurbished sports hall, new fitness suite and storerooms are all meticulously maintained. The availability of a perimeter walkway promotes students’ engagement in physical activity, as well as positively contributing to their social development. Management is highly commended for its proactive approach in providing these facilities and resources.

- The subject department is very well resourced with all the necessary equipment to support teaching and learning. Whenever resources may allow, consideration should be given to the purchase of additional equipment, such as pedometers, heart-rate monitors and tablet computers, to support students to monitor their physical activity behaviours, exercise intensity and motor learning.

- There is a strong recognition by all involved of the vast benefits that accrue from positive physical activity behaviours, particularly for females. An admirable extra-curricular sports and physical activity programme is provided to meet the interests of students. The provision of a number of whole-school initiatives, such as the health and wellbeing week, and programmes that aim to improve physical fitness is exemplary. The proactive approach taken to establishing links with community groups, including the Waterford Sports Partnership extends and embeds students’ learning experiences within their community.
PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• The physical education department works collaboratively to ensure that all aspects of the physical education programmes are planned and organised to a very high standard.

• The comprehensive subject plan presents a broad, balanced and developmental programme of work for all year groups. The broad aims of the subject plan are appropriate to support students’ understanding and appreciate the benefits of physical activity, exercise and sport for all age groups and abilities. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that a small number of over-arching learning outcomes for each year group be prioritised from the range of outcomes identified in the subject plan.

• The unique TY programme, in collaboration with a local centre for people with learning disabilities, is exemplary. The emphasis on the social and emotional benefits of physical activity, in addition to the physical benefits, is particularly noteworthy. Similarly the involvement of TY students in coaching for Special Olympics and planning and organising differentiated activities and events provides highly enriching learning experiences.

• The composition of the senior cycle programme, which is facilitated by the construction of the timetable, is also well considered. The programme of work is both interesting and relevant to these students. The provision of a taster session to introduce students to new forms of activity, such as Pilates, and giving students a choice of activity is good practice.

• The school should consider applying for the Active School Flag, as validation of its exemplary approach to Physical Education and promotion of physical activity, exercise and sport.

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 board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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