

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education  
REPORT**

**Gorey Community School  
Esmonde Street, Gorey  
Co. Wexford  
Roll number: 91492N**

**Date of inspection: 17 May 2012**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	16 & 17 May 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussions with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during ten class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of learning and teaching varied from satisfactory to very good in the lessons observed.
- Good practice was observed in lessons where learning outcomes were clear, and where all students were included and actively engaged in purposeful developmental tasks and with opportunities for independent and collaborative learning.
- Lessons were characterised by a positive and affirming atmosphere.
- Facilities are of a good quality and well maintained.
- Good progress has been made in developing a collaborative approach to subject department planning.
- The school provides an extensive extra-curricular sport and physical activities programme.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Management should ensure that the timetable arrangements adequately support students' meaningful engagement in the subject.
  - All teachers should ensure that lessons have clear learning outcomes and that planned tasks optimise opportunities for skill acquisition, concept development and application.
  - Future developmental planning should focus on identifying learning outcomes for each year group, the implementation of a common and coherent approach to the assessment process and the further development of the programme of work at senior cycle.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Gorey Community School is a large co-educational school with an enrolment of 1,544 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to very good in the lessons observed.
- A positive and affirming atmosphere was evident in most lessons. Teachers worked hard to engage students, to encourage and affirm their efforts and to keep them on task. Efforts to include students with special educational needs were effective, with exemplary practice noted in one lesson in particular.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers established the intended learning outcomes at the outset. This good practice helped provide students with concrete goals for what they were expected to know and be able to do as a result of their engagement. This practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Approaches to initial warm-up activities varied considerably. While most were effective in engaging and preparing students for the developmental phase of the lesson, best practice was observed where teachers devolved responsibility to students to apply their previous learning to complete their own warm-up, or to lead their peers. In one lesson, small groups of students were required to complete a series of functional and dynamic range-of-motion activities that were displayed on task sheets. This good practice engaged students in movement analysis that focused on learning to move efficiently and effectively.
- There was scope for development in other lessons where the structure, purpose and intensity of activity tasks were less effective in engaging all students. It is important that tasks are structured to differentiate for the varying levels of motivation, skill and fitness within the class group.
- Questioning was used effectively to engage students and to assess their understanding. When used, demonstration was effective and provided students with good visual references and criteria by which to gauge their own performance. Developmental tasks worked best when there was an optimal work-to-rest ratio, short focused instructions and clear performance outcomes. Such practices also reduced challenges to classroom management. Some tasks would have benefitted from optimising the space and equipment available to provide more opportunities for students for skill acquisition or application.
- Peer-assisted learning was effectively employed in some lessons, and the use of task sheets provided students with a means of recording their observations based on set criteria. Opportunities were also provided for students to apply feedback received from their peers and to evaluate its effectiveness in developing their competency. The expansion of such effective collaborative learning practices should be considered, where appropriate.
- Recapitulation on learning took place at the completion of some lessons. This effective practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Teachers maintain good records of students' participation in class and reporting to parents is in line with school policy. Some good work has been undertaken to develop the assessment process. However, this is an area for further development and the implementation of a common and coherent approach should form part of future subject department deliberations. The establishment of key assessment milestones, informed by identified learning outcomes for each year group, will help to further develop the assessment process. Additionally, students should have a system of retaining a record of their engagement and progress.

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

- The time allocation for Physical Education is sufficient to support the delivery of the planned programmes. However, management should ensure that the timetable arrangements adequately support students' meaningful engagement with the subject. It is preferable that the allocated two periods per week be structured as one double, in cases where this does not presently exist. When timetabling classes concurrently, it is better that classes are from the same year group. Furthermore, management should ensure, through consultation with the physical education department, that the number of classes timetabled concurrently does not exceed what is practical to maintain quality learning experiences for all students.
- There is good support and engagement for continuing professional development.
- While the school has good facilities the pressure on their use, as a result of the volume of students, places some strain at times on the physical education department. Notwithstanding accessibility issues, consideration should be given to redeveloping the balcony area as an additional teaching and learning facility.
- The department is well resourced and appropriate systems are in place to accommodate the purchase of additional equipment when required.
- The school's efforts to provide and deliver a range of extra-curricular activities and programmes are highly commended. In addition to the broad range of competitive sports, programmes and events such as peer-mentoring, first-year sports days, outdoor education trips, sports and activities tours, greatly enhance students' experiences of a diversity of physical activities within and beyond their own community.
- Management should reconsider the provision of vending machines with energy dense foods for sale on the school premises. These products are contradictory to the many positive health-related messages promoted through the physical education programmes.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A very good blend of experience and expertise exists among the seven teachers in the physical education department. Consideration should be given to facilitating regular internal professional development as a means of sharing and capitalising on the collective professional competencies.
- Good progress has been made in collating the work of the physical education department and the programmes of work into a subject plan, with shared electronic access. The development of schemes of work at Junior Cycle, TY and LCA provide good guidance on the concepts, principles, strategies and skills to be developed. Consideration should be given to establishing key learning outcomes for each year group. This will also inform the assessment process.
- There is scope to further develop the senior cycle programme. Consideration should be given to looking at introducing elements of the draft Physical Education Senior Cycle framework.
- Elements of self-evaluation and reflection inform future planning for the organisation and delivery of the programmes of work. For example, the use of questionnaires to determine students' experiences and opinions of their TY programme is good practice. Consideration should be given to expanding this approach to include the opinions of students from other year groups at regular intervals.

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

*Published November 2012.*

# **Appendix**

## **School response to the report**

### **Submitted by the Board of Management**

#### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Physical Education Teachers broadly accept the report as a reflection of practice and student experience observed towards the end of a particularly busy year. The team of teachers appreciate the constructive and developmental approach evident during the inspection and welcomes any such further learning opportunities. The team is heartened and affirmed by the recognition of best practice in many areas identified in the inspector's report.

#### **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 so far as the timetabling issues identified are concerned, every effort is being made to make optimum provision within the confines of student numbers and facility limitations. The Physical Education team are meeting regularly with the objective of agreeing and implementing common key assessment milestones for each year group.

A healthy eating planning sub-group has been established as part of the overall school planning and development process.

A more cohesive process of evaluation and self-evaluation is being implemented.