

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT**

**De La Salle College
Newtown, Waterford**

Date of inspection: 8 February 2012



**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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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| Date of inspection | 6 and 8 February 2012 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussions with co-ordinator and teachers• Interaction with students | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 11 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers |

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed.
- Lessons were well paced with a good level of engagement, enjoyment and enthusiasm in a positive and productive atmosphere.
- Physical Education enjoys a valued status as a core subject on the curriculum for all students.
- The school has very good facilities and the physical education department is well resourced to deliver a comprehensive physical education programme.
- The subject department is well co-ordinated. A number of elements have been identified to help further develop the subject in the school.
- A strong emphasis on participation in sport is promoted through the provision of a range of extra-curricular activities.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- School management should review its procedures for the deployment of teachers to deliver the physical education programmes and take a more strategic approach when timetabling classes concurrently.
 - Opportunities for peer-assisted learning, a greater focus on developing efficiency and effectiveness in the execution of movement patterns, and where relevant, the greater use of questioning, should be incorporated into lessons.
 - The identification of learning outcomes for each year group, the inclusion of a broader range of activities in the programmes of work, the further development of the assessment process, and a subject-specific risk assessment audit should be included in the subject plan.
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INTRODUCTION

De La Salle College is a voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 1174 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate. A previous inspection of Physical Education was conducted in the school in 2007.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was of a good standard overall. A systematic approach was taken to the organisation and delivery of all lessons. Prior planning, which involved the preparation of equipment, facilities and resources ensured that lessons were appropriately paced.
- Best practice was observed when lessons were underpinned by clear learning outcomes, which were shared with students at the outset. In some lessons, teachers revisited these intentions to consolidate learning. The extension of this practice to all lessons is recommended.
- Warm-up activities were appropriately structured, with well sequenced and progressive tasks that promoted physiological readiness for the focused activity. A good focus on developing students' understanding of basic anatomy and physiological response to exercise was incorporated into most lessons. Opportunities to enhance students' movement competency through a focus on simple biomechanics should be optimised during lessons, where appropriate. Consideration should be given to devolving responsibility to students to lead elements of their lessons and, where appropriate, to include peer-assisted learning to promote movement competency and understanding.
- Most lessons had a good commitment to questioning to enhance students' understanding. This practice should be extended to all physical education lessons. The nature of the planned tasks ensured that students' learning was incrementally developed in most lessons. Opportunities for self-directed learning were provided for students when completing tasks, such as assessing their skill-related and health-related fitness, or when completing an exercise circuit. The introduction of conditioned games earlier in some lessons, in addition to lower work-to-rest ratios, would have been more beneficial in optimising opportunities for students to acquire and apply specific skills and movement concepts in the game context.
- There was a positive working atmosphere and students enjoyed their physical education lessons and engaged with enthusiasm. Teachers have established a positive rapport with students and there was a calm and respectful approach to all interactions. Most lessons had good levels of participation. However, in some lessons there were a number of students who were unable to participate in the practical activities. Additional strategies for the greater inclusion of these students should be developed.
- While elements of assessment are incorporated into the programmes of work, the further development of the overall assessment process is recommended. The implementation of an agreed approach to assessment by all teachers should be discussed, developed and implemented. A range of approaches should be identified and a number of key assessment milestones established for each year group, based on identified criteria in the achievement of defined learning outcomes.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The time provision and the allocation of one double period to all class groups ensure that students have sufficient time for meaningful engagement in the subject. Care should be taken to ensure that the number of classes timetabled concurrently does not adversely impact on the quality of delivery of the programmes. This is especially relevant where there is an overlap of classes from different year groups.
- There is a need for a more strategic approach to the deployment of staff to deliver the subject. The deployment of teachers who do not possess physical education teaching qualifications should be addressed.
- The school has very good facilities to support the organisation and delivery of a broad physical education programme. The recent investment in a fitness suite extends the potential learning experiences within the physical education programme. The use of additional local facilities and amenities also extends the potential to embed students' physical activity experiences within their own community.
- The subject is well resourced with sufficient equipment and materials to support the delivery of the planned programmes of work. The purchase of additional equipment to further enhance teaching and learning should be considered: digital video, equipment to support functional movement, and the installation of a whiteboard in the sports hall.
- There is a very positive attitude towards engagement in sport through the extra-curricular programme. The school has earned a strong reputation for achievement in a number of sports, particularly in hurling. Those involved in facilitating and coaching students' involvement in the range of sporting activities deserve much credit.
- The positioning of vending machines with energy-dense and nutrient-poor products should be reconsidered. These machines provide messages about health and wellbeing conflicting with those promoted through the school fruit smoothie bar or the physical education, social, personal and health education (SPHE), and extra-curricular sports programme.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject is well co-ordinated and most elements involved in the organisation and delivery of the physical education programmes are included in the subject plan.
- The planned activity modules are underpinned by schemes of work. To build on this work, it is recommended that learning outcomes be identified for each year group. These outcomes should identify the knowledge and skills that students should acquire and develop as a result of their participation in the programmes. The subject plan should identify how students' learning is developed in an incremental and coherent manner.
- There is an over-emphasis on games in the programmes of work, particularly at junior cycle. Whilst a major games emphasis is appropriate to the context of the school, there is a need for greater diversity in the planned programmes of work. Additional strands of the syllabus should be included and a greater focus on the development of knowledge and skills that underpin effective participation in all physical activities.
- A subject-specific risk assessment audit should be included in the subject plan.

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

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