

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT

St John's College, De La Salle
Ballyfermot, Dublin
Roll number: 60510M

Date of inspection: 24 September 2015



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	24 September 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning during the lessons observed was excellent.
- Students were very well engaged by physical education lessons and exhibited very positive attitudes towards health and fitness.
- The excellent rapport in evidence between teachers and students, and the high levels of co-operation between students and their peers, are contributing to a very positive learning experience.
- Good subject department planning is in place and individual lessons were very well planned.
- Excellent strategies for the development of student autonomy in learning and for the inclusion of students' views in the planning and organisation of the physical education programme are in place.
- A good range of extracurricular physical activities is provided to students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should provide lessons in Physical Education for all students as soon as practicable, within the scope of available resources.
 - Lessons in Physical Education should be taken by teachers who hold qualifications recognised by the Teaching Council for the teaching of the subject.
 - The school should progress plans for the building of a physical education hall as a matter of priority.
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INTRODUCTION

St John's College, De La Salle is an all-boys voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 438 students in the current school year. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in our Schools (DEIS) programme and also avails of supports from the School Completion Programme (SCP). The school is under the patronage of Le Chéile Schools Trust and offers the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate as well as the Transition Year (TY) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes, and the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning during the lessons observed was of a very high quality. Teachers used a wide range of strategies to engage and motivate students. Particularly successful was the sharing of the desired learning outcomes for the lesson with students at the start of the lesson and the regular reference to these learning outcomes throughout the lesson and as part of recapping at the end of the lesson.
- Students were active, interested and very well behaved in all lessons. When required to work on their own or in small groups, they remained on task and focussed throughout.
- Lessons took place in a positive atmosphere where mutual respect between teachers and students was clearly evident and students co-operated fully, both with their teachers and their peers. It is clear that very positive attitudes towards health, physical activity and towards education in general are being developed during physical education lessons.
- Regular opportunities were provided during lessons for student input and for peer learning. These were very successfully managed by teachers.
- Differentiation in the tasks set by teachers facilitated student autonomy and ensured that all students were able to achieve success. This was particularly evident when using the local leisure centre where students worked independently at their own level. These students utilised all equipment with appropriate levels of care and in line with best safety procedures.
- Students' learning was very good in all lessons. Students' responses to questioning from both teachers and the inspector, as well as questions posed by students themselves, indicated a very good level of understanding.
- Very good use of aspects of assessment for learning (AfL) was noted in lessons with opportunities provided to students to set their own learning goals and to provide comment on each other's performances being particularly noteworthy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school has, this year, begun the process of phasing in Physical Education as part of the formal school curriculum at junior cycle by offering it to JCSP classes. This has resulted in one first year class, one second year class and two third year classes having timetabled lessons in Physical Education. While the school is commended for the fact that Physical Education is now available to some classes at junior cycle, and it is noted that all senior cycle classes have timetabled lessons in Physical Education, the school

should progress to providing timetabled lessons in Physical Education for all students as soon as available resources permit.

- The school has very good outdoor facilities available to it including a very spacious pitch area and a hardcourt area on the school grounds. The lack of a suitable indoor hall poses some difficulties for the school, especially in times of inclement weather, and this limits the range of physical education activities that the school can offer on-site.
- The school provides some physical education lessons in a locally available health and leisure centre. While this is an excellent facility, its use places a significant financial burden on the school. As the facility is open to the public, there are also some supervision challenges associated with its use which the school has been proactive in addressing. It is recommended that the school should aim to progress plans for the building of its own physical education hall as a matter of priority.
- A large number of teachers in the school are involved in the delivery of a good range of extracurricular physical activities. In particular, the health promoting school initiative which has seen, among other measures, a ban on the sale of carbonated, high-sugar drinks in the school, is particularly commended.
- The school has employed a qualified physical education teacher this year. Heretofore, and to a lesser extent in the current year, a number of staff members, who do not hold physical education teaching qualifications, have been timetabled to take physical education lessons. While these teachers have, in many instances, considerable background, training and significant expertise in many areas of physical activity, it is nonetheless recommended that the school progress to ensuring that all physical education lessons are taken by teachers with physical education qualifications recognised by the Teaching Council. While the other staff members have made a significant contribution to the culture of health and wellbeing that is evident in the school, the most appropriate means through which this contribution should continue is through extracurricular physical activity.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A good subject plan is in place which covers all the main aspects of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school. Particularly praiseworthy are the strategies that have been implemented to take students' views on board with regard to the content of the physical education programme. The planned review of the physical education programme at Christmas 2015 is regarded as appropriate.
- The range of activities that are planned as part of the school's physical education programme are limited by available resources, both in terms of facilities and personnel. Despite this, the school makes every effort to provide a broad and balanced programme of activities. It is recommended that aquatics be provided to students if resources allow.
- Some fitness testing has been planned to provide information to students with regard to their level of aerobic fitness. Where such tests are used, the teacher should ensure that information provided to students arising from these tests has a developmental focus, whereby the emphasis is on the helping the individual to understand their performance in relation to their own growth and maturation rather than in competition with their peers.

- The quality of planning for individual lessons was very good with a wide range of resources being very well utilised. The use of information and communication technology (ICT) equipment was particularly effective with excellent use being made of an iPad in particular in one lesson to enable students to view a video recording of their performances.
- Teachers maintain records of students' attendance and participation in all physical education lessons. Formal assessment in relation to Physical Education is planned for this year. The planned inclusion of Physical Education in reports to parents, to include a formative comment on students' participation and progress in the subject is commended. It is also noted that JCSP profiles have been used by the school for reporting in Physical Education for a number of years.

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.