

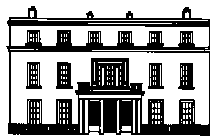
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education  
REPORT**

**Terenure College  
Templeogue Road, Dublin 6W  
Roll number: 60570H**

**Date of inspection: 23 April 2010**



**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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## **SUBJECT INSPECTION REPORT**

This report has been written following a subject inspection in Terenure College. It presents the findings of an evaluation of the quality of teaching and learning in Physical Education and makes recommendations for the further development of the teaching of this subject in the school. The evaluation was conducted over two days during which the inspector visited classrooms and observed teaching and learning. The inspector interacted with students and their teachers, examined students' work, and had discussions with teachers. The inspector reviewed school planning documentation and teachers' written preparation. Following the evaluation visit, the inspector provided oral feedback on the outcomes of the evaluation to the principal and the subject teachers. 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.

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

Participation in sport and physical activity is highly valued and supported in Terenure College, which has a longstanding and valued reputation of achievement across a range of sporting disciplines. A significant level of resources is committed by the college to the provision and maintenance of the extensive sporting facilities, which provide the infrastructure to support the various physical education, sport and physical activity programmes. A culture of participation and engagement in sport and physical activity is promoted through various effective supports that include a games master post and the recruitment of additional coaching staff, in addition to the extensive involvement of a large number of the teaching staff, many of whom are qualified coaches in the various disciplines.

Excellent facilities and resources are available to support the provision and delivery of the physical education, physical activity and co-curricular sports programmes. They consist of a large indoor sports hall complete with cricket nets, a large strength-and-conditioning gym, a twenty-five metre indoor swimming pool, six tennis courts and three outdoor basketball courts, nine rugby pitches, a soccer pitch, a Gaelic games pitch and a small synthetic-surface playing pitch. In addition, there is an athletics zone consisting of a four-lane eighty-metre tartan running track, a long-jump pit and a dedicated area for shot-putt and discuss throwing, and a recreational route way around the large lake located on the college campus. These facilities are very well presented, with a dedicated staff responsible for their operation and maintenance. The commitment of the trustees and management to the provision of these facilities and resources to support students' engagement in sport and physical activity is exemplary.

There are two dedicated offices to support the work of the physical education department. Access is also available to a class room, which is adjacent to the sports hall. A wide range of equipment and resources to support teaching and learning is available and all items are neatly stored in the offices. A large storeroom adjacent to the sports hall also hosts a range of equipment. Consideration should be given to purchasing additional gym mats to support the delivery of the

gymnastics and other relevant strands of the syllabus. A requisition system is in place to support the purchase of additional or replacement items of equipment and resources and this was reported to work well. There is good access in the school to information and communication technology (ICT), including media players and digital technology. Consideration should be given to providing broadband access in the physical education offices and in the sports hall to support the research, planning and delivery of the subject.

The physical education department consists of two teachers, both of whom are graduates of the subject. Management actively supports continuing professional development (CPD) and the school has engaged in the professional development programme provided by the Junior Cycle Physical Education Support Service (JCPESS). Teachers also continue to actively pursue additional certification in sport-specific courses and this commitment to ongoing professional learning is highly commended.

Despite the excellent support for sport across the school, the timetabled curricular provision for Physical Education should be reviewed. The subject is a core component of the curriculum for all junior cycle and Transition Year (TY) students. The time allocation for first-year and second-year students has been increased recently from a single period to a double period per week. This increase is commendable as it now provides sufficient time for students to have a more meaningful engagement in the focused topic of each lesson. Third-year students receive one period per week, which is significantly below the two hours of Physical Education per week for all students recommended by the Department of Education and Skills in the *Rules and Programme for Secondary Schools*. Physical Education lessons of single-period duration impose significant limitations on the quality and depth of students' engagement, especially if this is the only contact students' have with the subject on a weekly basis. In senior cycle, the time provision of four periods of Physical Education per week for TY students is excellent. It is, nevertheless, highly regrettable that the subject is not provided for fifth or sixth-year students. It is acknowledged that many senior students participate in the school's co-curricular sports and physical activities programme; however this cannot be viewed as a substitute for a quality curricular physical education programme.

In light of the timetabling issues identified above, it is recommended that the provision of single-period lessons for third-year classes be reviewed and increased to provide a minimum of a double period per year group per week, and that the college work towards providing the subject for all students, up to and including sixth year, in line with the recommendations of the Department. It is commendable that management is currently undertaking a comprehensive curriculum review as part of its whole-school strategic development planning. This will provide a valuable opportunity to review the role that a quality physical education programme can serve in contributing to the attainment of the school's planned educational goals for all students.

A wide range of activities are provided to cater for the recreational and sporting interests of students. The college has developed a formidable reputation as one of the country's elite rugby-playing schools and often fields up to thirty-five teams across all grades and ability levels. The school also supports a number of sports clubs for its students including athletics, badminton, cricket, equestrian, Gaelic football, golf, hurling, swimming, scuba-diving and table-tennis. Significant resources are devoted to ensuring that students are provided with the best possible coaching and training support and advice and that the development of players and athletes is carefully monitored. The production of a booklet outlining a code of practice for coaches, parents, supporters and players in respecting the so-called *Terenure Way* is highly commendable. In addition, the preparation and availability of information guides and coaching booklets to promote good practice amongst all involved in the delivery of the sports programmes is also highly

praiseworthy. The inclusion of focused events such as the *Terenure Run* and an annual sports day provides students with opportunities to apply and test themselves against established norms and their peers.

While great pride is justifiably taken by the school in its sporting reputation and in the exploits of its many rugby teams and athletes in representing the school, the support for the culture of participation and endeavour across the diversity of physical activities provided is equally admirable. Evidence over the course of the evaluation indicated that a significant amount of time and effort is devoted to encouraging and supporting students of all abilities to engage in the sports-and-recreation programmes in the school. Large groups of students were observed over the course of lunchtime playing tennis, tag rugby, training for the Leinster schools' athletics competition, conditioning in the weights room, availing of the allotted swimming session and several students were also encountered using the walkway around the lake to get some exercise. Great credit is due to everyone involved in the organisation, delivery and support of students' engagement in all of these activities.

Engagement in sport and physical activity is visibly promoted throughout the school. Photographs of recent events and trips are displayed on the electronic notice boards, with results, photographs and jerseys of representative teams and players proudly displayed throughout the corridors. Such displays provide recognition and affirmation to students for their efforts and contribute to the positive promotion of a culture of physical activity in the school.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

The quality of planning in Physical Education is of a good standard. Management supports formal subject department planning meetings and teachers are afforded regular opportunities to meet and discuss the content, organisation and delivery of the programme. Teachers also meet and collaborate on a daily basis to discuss the organisation of groups and the sharing of facilities, resources and equipment.

The physical education department has adopted the planning frameworks promoted by both the Junior Cycle Physical Education Support Service (JCPESS) and the school development planning initiative (SDPI). This supports the process of documenting all aspects related to the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school. A vast range of planning documents related to the physical education and co-curricular programmes in the school was made available during the inspection. These identified issues relevant to the organisation and delivery of the physical education programme including, health and safety considerations, the identification of possible cross-curricular opportunities and strategies for inclusion of students with special educational needs. The programme of work for each year group is also documented and schemes of work have been prepared to support the delivery of each planned activity module. To improve accessibility to the subject plan, it is recommended that all of the various planning documents and schemes of work be collated into a single concise and coherent document. Furthermore the programmes of work should identify key learning outcomes for each year group and these should be expressed in terms of the specific knowledge, cognitive and technical skills that students are expected to acquire and develop as a result of their engagement.

The programmes of work for junior cycle and TY are well developed and indicate that a broad and relevant programme is provided for these students. Most strands of the syllabus are provided for, although there are some exceptions which should be addressed. An increased focus on the

adventure-activities strand and the provision of the gymnastics and dance strands of the syllabus should be incorporated, as appropriate, into the planned programmes of work at junior cycle.

The focus of the TY physical education programme on the development of personal and leadership skills is in keeping with the ethos of the TY programme. The organisation of the TY programme is laudable, especially the provision of electives where students can choose the courses they wish to follow. This good practice acknowledges students' maturity and interests and may lead to a greater level of engagement in the selected options. A residential trip to an adventure activity centre is also included in the physical education programme for all TY students. It is particularly commendable that TY students are provided with opportunities to obtain certification for their studies in some of the courses provided.

Schemes of work have been developed for the planned TY activity modules and identify the progression of motor-skill development and the application of these skills in their performance context. The incorporation of a rich task into the planned schemes of work is commendable as this can provide students with tangible goals for their learning and establish criteria on which to measure their success. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that the schemes of work be further developed. Schemes of work should also identify the key learning outcomes in addition to the focused topics for each unit of work and these should be aligned to the most appropriate teaching and learning methodologies and resources required to support teaching and learning. Schemes should also identify how assessment is to be used to support and evaluate student's learning. A common template should be adopted by the physical education department to ensure consistency in the development of these schemes of work.

Planning for resources including equipment and materials is well advanced. A significant quantity of folders and reference material has been compiled over the years by the physical education department. This provides an extensive array of resource material to support teaching and learning. In addition a range of resources has been developed or acquired including textbooks, DVDs and worksheets, which also provide a wealth of reference material to support teachers' planning and preparation. Furthermore, the physical education department has acquired a range of equipment to support students' learning and measurement of the components of physical fitness. These resources are centrally stored to ensure that they can be easily accessed by both teachers and students. It is recommended that the subject department include a long-term plan for the acquisition of larger items of equipment, such as additional gym mats and benches, which may be achieved on a phased basis.

A detailed health and safety audit is undertaken by the school and the physical education department also conduct a risk assessment on a regular basis to identify any potential hazards associated with the various facilities and procedures. There was good adherence to the principles of health and safety in all aspects of participation and tuition in the lessons observed.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

There was a good standard of teaching and learning in the physical education lessons observed. Students changed quickly for their lessons and once attendance was recorded, teachers introduced the topic and purpose of the lessons. Teachers were very well prepared, with all the necessary equipment and materials available prior to the lessons, which ensured that lessons commenced and progressed expediently. In most cases, links were created with previous lessons so that students had a sense of continuity in their learning. Best practice was observed when teachers shared the intended learning outcomes with their students, which provided them with a clear

focus for their learning. The use of this approach is recommended in all lessons. In some instances, the whiteboard was effectively used to explain the topic and to record students' responses to questions posed by the teacher. In a lesson on the triple jump, a video clip was successfully used to provide students with a visual reference of the event, and this strategy also provided them with the technical points to support their learning and subsequent performance of the event.

In the lessons visited the topics covered were athletics which included lessons on throwing, jumping and sprinting events, and an aquatics lesson with an emphasis on cardio-vascular endurance. Following the brief introduction phase, lessons began with warm-up activities that were mostly related to the focused topic. Good practice was observed in a number of lessons, when students were provided with opportunities to rehearse simple patterns of movement that promote effective body management and movement efficiency. Questioning was used to good effect during dynamic and static stretching activities to promote students' knowledge of basic anatomy and physiology. In one lesson the pace of the initial warm-up activities was of too high an intensity and this should be revisited. It is best that anaerobic type activities are placed towards the end of the warm-up phase when participants are in a state of physiological readiness for high-intensity activity. Consideration should be given to providing students, where appropriate, with opportunities to lead their peers in some aspects of the warm-up activities. This will help to reinforce their learning and enhance their movement competence and confidence, while also contributing to the assessment process.

Lessons progressed through a series of well structured tasks. Demonstration was effectively used to illustrate the key technical points of the activity for students. In all cases demonstration was of a good technical quality. Questioning was used as a prompt for students to focus on their kinaesthetic awareness and to determine their understanding of the technical components of the activity, which is good practice. Heart-rate monitors and task cards were very successfully used in an aquatics lesson to provide students with an opportunity to learn about the cardiac response to exercise intensity. The availability of instantaneous biofeedback greatly enhanced students' understanding of the important exercise concepts of overload, intensity, work-to-rest ratios and technical efficiency.

Opportunities that encourage students to critically analyse their own performances and those of their peers should be planned and incorporated into lessons. The greater use of peer-review should be considered as this useful strategy helps to deepen students' knowledge and understanding. For example, in the athletics lessons on throwing or jumping, through the application of set criteria, students could be encouraged to observe and analyse their partners' execution of the specific technique and then provide feedback on how to improve the performance. This will help the performers to relate their own internal kinaesthetic feedback with the augmented feedback provided by their partners. In this way, students learn through practical performance, analysis and discussion from the feedback, how to perform each activity more efficiently and effectively and further deepen their understanding of the focused topic.

In all cases there was good classroom management and teachers had established a good rapport with their students. Lessons were characterised by mutual respect and adherence to a high standard of behaviour. Teachers were actively engaged with their students and offered assistance and encouragement to individuals when required.

Questioning was used to good effect at the end of lessons to consolidate students' learning. Teachers also gave an outline of the content of the next lesson. This is good practice as it helps students to view their physical education lessons as part of a learning continuum rather than a

series of isolated experiences. Students demonstrated a good work ethic and were diligent in their application to the tasks set during their lessons. Students had a good knowledge of the focused topics when questioned by the inspector and demonstrated a good understanding of their work.

## **ASSESSMENT**

Assessment of students' learning in Physical Education at junior cycle occurs mostly through questioning and observation of students' participation, application and progress. The completion of worksheets and short assignments may also be used on occasion. A more detailed and systematic approach is taken to assessment of TY students' learning in Physical Education. In this year group, the use of strategies such as maintaining an activity logbook, completing a nutritional diary and the development of a physical fitness and performance profile, provide a useful mechanism to support and evaluate students' engagement and learning.

There is scope for the further development of the assessment process, particularly at junior cycle. It is commendable that this area has been identified by the physical education department as part of its strategic planning. The range of assessment strategies and evaluation criteria, based on the planned learning outcomes, should be identified for each year group. This may include elements of the formative process already in place, along with a practical performance at least once per year and the completion of key assignments such as project work, rich tasks and evidence of other relevant experience such as officiating or coaching competencies. The assessment of practical performance should involve the physical education department in formulating performance descriptors appropriate to particular levels in specific activities. The communication of these descriptors to students should help in providing a focus for learning as well as making the assessment criteria open and transparent. It is recommended that the physical education department refer to the work conducted by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) at [www.ncca.ie](http://www.ncca.ie) on assessment for learning, as well as the JCPESS (at [www.jcpe.ie](http://www.jcpe.ie)) in this area. The assessment process should also aim to include a system of retaining elements of students' work. Students' should be encouraged to generate and document evidence of their engagement, performance and completion of set tasks and assignments, which will enable them to produce a portfolio of their learning in Physical Education. Elements of students' participation in co-curricular and extracurricular physical activities may also be included in their portfolios.

Teachers maintain good records of students' attendance, participation and progress in their lessons. Reporting to parents regarding students' progress and attainment in Physical Education occurs mostly through parent-teacher meetings and through the use of the student journal. At present the subject is only included on formal school reports home to parents for TY students. It is recommended that an evaluative comment on students' engagement, progress and attainment be included in reports to parents for all students.

## **SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

The following are the main strengths identified in the evaluation:

- Excellent facilities and resources are available to support the delivery of the physical education, school sport and physical activity programmes.
- CPD and teacher engagement in relevant courses is promoted and fully supported by management. Members of the physical education department have been proactive in their own professional learning.
- The physical education programme is well organised and planned.

- There was a good standard of teaching and learning in the physical education lessons observed.
- Tasks set in lessons were appropriately challenging for students of all abilities.
- Students observed were confident and competent performers, were enthusiastic in their engagement and clearly enjoyed their physical education lessons.
- A respectful, positive and affirming atmosphere was evident in all lessons observed and teachers have established a good rapport with their students.
- There is exemplary promotion, provision, participation and achievement in extra-curricular sport and physical activities.

As a means of building on these strengths and to address areas for development, the following key recommendations are made:

- Management should work towards ensuring that every student has appropriate timetabled access to Physical Education in accordance with the recommendations of the Department.
- To improve accessibility to the subject plan, it is recommended that all of the various planning documents and schemes of work be collated into a single concise and coherent document that informs the delivery of the subject in the school.
- The greater use of strategies that involve students in analysis of performance, such as self-analysis and peer-analysis, should be considered to support students' learning in their physical education lessons.
- The further development of the assessment process is recommended. An evaluative comment on students' learning in Physical Education should be included on the formal school reports to parents for all students.

Post-evaluation meetings were held with the subject teachers and with the principal at the conclusion of the evaluation when the draft findings and recommendations of the evaluation were presented and discussed.

*Published November 2010.*



# **Appendix**

## **School response to the report**

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

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

The Staff and Management of Terenure College welcome the report of the Subject Inspection of Physical Education and the subsequent Report.

In particular we welcome and appreciate the recognition and commendation given to:

- The exemplary commitment to the provision of excellent facilities and resources to support students' engagement in sport and physical activity;
- The high quality of teaching, planning and ongoing professional development;
- The very good atmosphere and rapport between students and teachers;
- The confidence of the students and their enthusiastic engagement;

#### **Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

We have reflected upon the report's key recommendations and make the following observations:

- The planning documents and schemes have been collated into a single document;
- The inclusion of Physical Education on formal school reports will be gradually expanded as will be the use of student self and peer analysis;
- As part of our review of the curriculum the recommendation with regards to timetabling will be given serious consideration. However, we also note the strong academic focus of the school and, what the report refers to as, the "exemplary promotion, provision, participation and achievement in extra-curricular sport and physical activities".