

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education  
REPORT**

**St Mary's C.B.S. Secondary School  
Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford  
Roll number: 63560T**

**Date of inspection: 02 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	02 February 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 five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was uniformly good, with some examples of very good practice in the lessons observed.
- Lessons were well structured and paced and the sequencing of activity tasks facilitated a high level of participation, enthusiasm and enjoyment.
- Very good facilities and resources are available to support the delivery of the subject.
- Sport and physical activity are highly valued, promoted and supported by management and teachers.
- A collaborative approach is taken to all aspects of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school.
- Planning for the organisation and delivery of the physical education programme is of a good standard.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- School management should continue to work to provide Physical Education for all students in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills, and to ensure that all teachers deployed to teach the subject are appropriately qualified.
- Learning outcomes and a formal approach to the assessment process should be developed for each year group, with students' progress and achievements in Physical Education included on school reports to parents.

## **INTRODUCTION**

St. Mary's C.B.S. is a voluntary secondary school for boys with a current enrolment of 692 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the established Leaving Certificate.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning was uniformly good in the lessons observed, with some examples of very good practice noted.
- Lessons were characterised by very good levels of participation, enthusiasm and enjoyment. A calm, respectful and encouraging approach was taken to motivate students and to affirm their efforts. Team teaching was effectively used in one lesson, where teachers worked very well through interchanging roles.
- Teachers shared the learning intentions with students at the outset. This good practice was augmented by the effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) in one lesson. In this case, criterion reference video clips were shown of phases of play in volleyball and the key performance indicators were extrapolated through well-framed questions. This provided students with a good overview of how the game is played, the physical and technical components involved in creating phases of play, and the tactical components involved in structuring offensive and defensive plays.
- Practical activities began with gradual and progressive warm-up activities. There was good use of subject-specific terminology, particularly focused on physiological response to exercise and anatomical references. In some cases, technical cues were given to support students in developing efficient movement mechanics. This is an aspect that should be further developed, particularly during the physiological and mobility phases of the warm-up.
- The nature of the developmental tasks ensured that students' learning was incrementally developed. Demonstration was of a good quality and helped to provide students with a visual impression of how the focused skill or phase of play is executed. Questioning for understanding was a common feature of all lessons.
- Opportunities for skill development were fully optimised, with some good efforts to differentiate for varying levels of ability. The construction of the skill rehearsal, co-operative rallies and competitive games ensured that all students were actively engaged throughout.
- To build on the good practice observed, opportunities for peer-assisted learning should be developed, when appropriate to the activity and the stage of student learning. This will enhance students' understanding and create a more focused approach to improving performance.
- Teachers regularly provided feedback to students about the quality of their performances in executing the focused skills or tasks. However, it is important that students are also afforded opportunities to apply the feedback and to re-evaluate their subsequent performances.
- Good records are maintained of students' participation in their physical education lessons. There were some good elements of formative assessment included in the lessons.

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

- The time provision and timetable arrangements for the subject are adequate to support the delivery of a comprehensive physical education programme. However, it is regrettable that students opting to study the LCVP do not have access to the subject. Management should continue to work to provide the subject for all students in line with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills. Furthermore, it is best practice that all teachers deployed to teach the subject are appropriately qualified.
- The concurrent timetable organisation for senior cycle classes supports an element of student choice and enables a broader programme of activities to be offered to meet the interests of students.
- The school has good facilities and is well resourced to support the organisation and delivery of the physical education and extra-curricular sports programme. The use of additional facilities and amenities in the community to augment students' physical activity experiences is good practice.
- A positive culture of engagement in sport and physical activity is fostered in the school. A broad range of sports is provided as part of the extra-curricular programme. The involvement of a considerable number of teachers in facilitating and coaching students' involvement deserves much credit. Consideration should be given to applying for an active school flag. Much good work is being undertaken in line with criteria for achievement and this would affirm the work of all involved in Physical Education, physical activity and school sport.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A collaborative approach is taken to the co-ordination of the subject. Meetings are held regularly and are well documented. Very good progress has been made in developing a comprehensive subject plan.
- The programmes of work for each year group are broadly in line with the syllabuses. The recent expansion of the programme of activities to provide greater diversity and balance between games and other activity strands is welcomed. The inclusion of physical activities, with relatively low skill thresholds that can be sustained across the life span, may help to create greater relevancy for students who may not be competitively orientated or possess advanced sport skills.
- Most of the planned activity modules are underpinned by schemes of work. The identification of clearly defined learning outcomes is good practice. To build on this work, it is recommended that learning outcomes also 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 their programmes. This process will help to identify how students' learning is developed in an incremental and coherent manner.
- Some elements of formal assessment are included at various stages in the programmes, such as certification for competency in canoeing, swimming and coaching certificates and the completion of key assignments. However, there is a need to formalise and further develop the assessment process. The implementation of an agreed approach by teachers to assessment should be discussed, developed and implemented. A number of key assessment milestones should be established for each year group in line with defined learning outcomes. Reporting to parents should be an integral part of this system.

- Self-evaluation has informed the evolution of the programmes of work currently being offered. The further development of the self-evaluation process should be considered to include an analysis of the effectiveness of the physical education programmes.
- Good attention is paid to health and safety and a comprehensive statement has been developed by the subject department. The risk assessment audit of the facilities, equipment and procedures should be included in the subject plan.

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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.

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