

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT**

**Tralee Community College
Tralee, County Kerry
Roll number: 70550H**

Date of inspection: 9 and 10 May 2013



**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

Dates of inspection	9 and 10 May 2013
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Physical Education is in a very healthy position in the school, with a strong commitment to the subject evident among all teachers, students and school management.
- Excellent planning is in place at whole-school and classroom level.
- The quality of teaching and learning is very good, with some excellent practice noted.
- The use of the rich task approach and the related co-operation with other schools in the locality are of significant benefit to the delivery of the subject.
- There are excellent assessment and reporting practices in place.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Whenever possible, physical education lessons should be taken by the school's qualified physical education teachers.
 - The proposed refurbishment of the school's hardcourt area should be progressed.
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INTRODUCTION

Tralee Community College is a co-educational school under the management of the Kerry Education Service (KES). The school has an enrolment of 128 students in its post-primary sector, equally split between boys and girls. The school has a significant post leaving certificate (PLC) enrolment of approximately 400 students. The school is supported through the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan and provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- A very good standard of teaching and learning was observed during the inspection. The sharing of learning objectives with students at the start of the lesson, together with the opportunities provided for guided reflection at the end of the lesson, were particularly impressive features of the lessons observed.
- The pacing of the lessons and the selection of content to be covered were appropriate to the developmental age and ability levels of students.
- An excellent rapport exists between students and teachers in the school and many opportunities were provided for students to engage in self-directed learning and to work at their own pace.
- Students' responses to the excellent questioning of teachers, as well as the high quality of competence exhibited while performing the tasks set, indicate that students are achieving to a high level in Physical Education.
- The extensive use of the rich task approach as a teaching methodology is highly commended. In this regard the excellent co-operation between the school and seven other schools as part of a community of practice is very beneficial to the students' experience in Physical Education.
- As well as helping students to prepare for and recover from exercise, the warm-up and cool-down phases of lessons were well utilised to impart key information regarding exercise physiology and the impact on the body of participation in physical activity.
- Despite the fact that the level of instruction delivered by external instructors during a swimming lesson was of a very high standard, it is nonetheless recommended that, with the exception of very specialised activities in which the school's physical education teachers may lack specific expertise and the use of external instructors is required, all lessons should be taken by the school's qualified physical education staff. This is to ensure continuity in the learning experience in all areas of the physical education curriculum and to facilitate the recall and application of key concepts learned in one area of physical activity to enhance learning in another.
- The use of a wide selection of resource materials, especially the well-designed worksheets and individual reflection sheets, is having a very positive impact on students' learning. The completion of these materials, together with use of the whiteboard as a teaching resource when appropriate, contributed to student's understanding and to the development of literacy skills.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The timetabled provision for Physical Education consists of a double period for all year groups. While this level of provision is the norm in many post-primary schools, the school is encouraged to seek to increase its provision in line with Department of Education and Skills recommendations (Rules and Programmes, 2004-2005), if this can be facilitated. Revisions planned to the school's curriculum as part of the junior cycle reform may facilitate this.
- A good range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities is offered to students, with soccer, swimming and athletics the main areas of student involvement. In addition to this, there are many physical-education-related trips and excursions organised as well as whole-school initiatives such as fitness week and energy awareness week. The latter, quite creatively, included information for students on energy expenditure while participating in exercise. The school has also begun working towards the achievement of the Active Schools Flag.
- There are excellent facilities available for the teaching of Physical Education in the school, with the nearby Tralee Sports Complex being regularly used for physical education lessons. Management is commended for its willingness to continue to use this facility, and its willingness to provide financial support to fund external trips as part of the school's physical education programme, despite the significant strain which these place on the school's finances. It is recommended that long-standing, well-documented plans for the refurbishment of the hardcourt area adjacent to the school be progressed.
- There are excellent strategies in place for the assessment of students' learning, both during lessons and as a terminal event at the end of a block of learning. The use of formative assessment through the rich task approach is particularly beneficial in this regard.
- All four qualified physical education teachers on staff demonstrate a commendable commitment to the highest standards with regard to the delivery of Physical Education in the school. In addition to the continuing professional development (CPD) provided by KES in which the teachers have participated, they have also availed of subject-specific CPD whenever possible. Such participation is facilitated and encouraged both by KES and school management. Subject department meetings also take place approximately three times per year.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject plan is a comprehensive, thorough document with a clear focus on the development of Physical Education across all areas of the school. The availability of high-quality physical education facilities has facilitated the planning of a broad and balanced physical education curriculum with all key areas of physical activity included.
- Planning for individual lessons was of a very high standard. It was clear that a significant amount of thought had gone into the content, structure, pacing, pedagogy and assessment of each lesson. This was a significant aid to students' learning and enjoyment.
- The well-planned involvement of special needs assistants (SNA) in working with assigned students, as well as assisting in the smooth running of physical education

lessons is beneficial to the learning experience of all students. Links forged with the IT Tralee have proved mutually beneficial in this regard.

- The efforts of the school's physical education department in establishing and developing a community of practice with seven other schools is particularly praiseworthy.
- Very good records are maintained of students' progress and participation in physical education lessons. These records are used to inform the excellent reporting practices that are in place.

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.