Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT

Christian Brothers’ College
Monkstown, County Dublin
Roll number: 60180R

Date of inspection: 14 April 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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MAIN FINDINGS

• Students displayed a high level of enthusiasm and commitment to their physical activity programme.

• There is a strong commitment to sport and providing students with positive physical activity experiences in this school.

• With the exception of Transition Year (TY), Physical Education is not part of the formal curriculum in the school; however, management and the advisory board of studies are exploring the possibility of introducing the subject.

• The time provision for the TY physical education programme is in line with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills.

• Adequate facilities are available and well maintained to support the delivery of Physical Education and the school sports programme.

• The diverse extracurricular games and physical activities programme is well planned and documented.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• Management should proceed with the immediate introduction of Physical Education on the curriculum for all students, delivered by appropriately qualified teachers.

• The TY physical activity plan should be further developed and documented.

• The principles underpinning participation and performance in physical activity and sport should be integrated into the planned learning experiences of students.
INTRODUCTION

Christian Brothers’ College, Monkstown, is a fee-paying secondary school for boys with 525 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, TY programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In the lesson observed, students demonstrated a very high level of engagement and enjoyment of their physical activity experiences.

- Initial warm-up activities were comprehensive to ensure students were well prepared to participate in subsequent higher-intensity activities. Consideration should be given to providing a graded approach to some of the mobility activities to differentiate for students of varying levels of fitness. Very good practice was observed when students assumed responsibility for elements of their own warm-up, under the guidance of their teacher. The further development of similar opportunities for students to demonstrate and apply their learning and to lead their peers should be introduced, whenever appropriate.

- Students used appropriate anatomical references when performing stretching exercises and were familiar and compliant with the proper execution of these exercises. Questioning was effectively used to promote students’ understanding of this aspect of participation. The greater use of questioning during all phases of lessons is recommended.

- Team activities were well organised and ensured that all students were fully included in the games. The development of a new game called big ball is highly innovative and the relatively low skill requirement of this game ensured that all students could participate at a similar level. This resulted in a highly enjoyable and engaging competitive game.

- While students were fully engaged physically in their lesson, their learning would have benefitted from a focus on some of the principles underpinning their participation and performance. For example, a focus on elements of motor learning, the physiological requirements of the activity, roles and responsibilities of team members, and the development of technical and tactical awareness would promote students’ cognitive development and a higher level of understanding of the purpose and benefits of physical activity and sport. Similarly, the explicit integration and exploration of concepts of leadership and personal development would contribute to the overall aims of the TY programme.

- Students were encouraged and affirmed for their efforts throughout their lesson. A very positive rapport has been established between students and their teacher. Similarly, students were very supportive and encouraging of each other and a strong camaraderie was evident amongst the class group. The fostering of this respectful and supportive culture is highly commended.

- Good records are maintained of students’ attendance and participation in their lessons. While students’ learning in some parts of the TY physical activity programme is assessed, there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to the assessment process. This is an area for future development.
SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Physical Education does not form part of the formal curriculum of the school. This is unsatisfactory. A physical activity programme is included on the TY programme and the time provision and timetable arrangements are in line with the recommendations of the Department. Management and the school community recognises the value of Physical Education to the holistic educational experiences of students. The findings of recent deliberations by management and the school’s advisory board of studies indicate the potential for curricular realignment to introduce Physical Education for all year groups. Management is encouraged to proceed immediately with the introduction of Physical Education on the curriculum for all students.

- Two interested and committed teachers with extensive experience in particular sports are deployed to deliver the TY programme. Whilst the deployment of these teachers ensures that students’ physical activity needs are provided for, the range of learning experiences possible in Physical Education is limited. Therefore, it is recommended that the school work towards a situation where all lessons in Physical Education are delivered by a teacher who is appropriately qualified in the subject.

- The facilities available are adequate to support the delivery of a broad range of physical activities. The indoor hall is restrictive for the majority of dynamic games, but is suitable for the delivery of a range of activities to promote movement competency, some components of fitness and team-building challenges. The outdoor areas, including the athletics area and pitches are well suited to providing for the athletics, games and adventure activities strands of the syllabus. The development and layout of the strength and conditioning facility is exemplary. This area provides a functional teaching and training facility to support students’ learning of all elements of physical fitness.

- An extensive extracurricular sports and physical activity programme is provided for all students in the school. The primary focus of this programme is to promote students’ regular involvement and participation. This is highly commended as it ensures that those who may not be competitively orientated are also catered for within the programme.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A collegial approach is taken to preparing the programme for TY students. Much of the discussion occurs informally and teachers ensure that the necessary resources and equipment are available to support the delivery of the programme.

- Elements of the TY physical activity programme are documented, particularly the modules on health and fitness. The full programme should be documented and presented to reflect the rationale for the programme, the intended learning outcomes, strategies for the inclusion of students of all abilities, the content and learning experiences, the resources required to deliver the programme and the various approaches to assessment to support and evaluate students learning. The content of the programme should identify the key principles, concepts and strategies that form the basis for the selection of the various activities and modules of study.

- A significant amount of time and effort is invested in organising and documenting the afternoon games and activities programme for all students. The use of multiple local sports venues and physical activity facilities is good practice as it introduces students to the physical activity and sporting opportunities available in their own community. Students’ are more likely to continue to engage in physical activity, either for recreation, fitness or performance as a result of their regular exposure to these facilities and opportunities.
The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

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

Physical Education is being phased into the school curriculum on a phased basis.