

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education  
REPORT**

**St Raphaela's Secondary School  
Stillorgan, Co. Dublin  
Roll number: 60361V**

**Date of inspection: 01 October 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	01 October 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was uniformly good with elements of exemplary practice noted in all lessons.
- Lessons had a positive and productive atmosphere, were well structured and appropriately paced.
- Students were actively engaged in purposeful and developmental learning tasks, which included some opportunities to assume leadership roles.
- The available facilities and resources support the implementation of a comprehensive physical education programme.
- Exemplary efforts are made to provide a diverse extra-curricular sport and physical activities programme to meet the interests of students.
- The planned physical education programmes are appropriately documented, well organised and resourced and provide a broad and balanced programme for each year group.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The further development of the assessment process should focus on identifying and aligning key learning outcomes with specific assessment milestones for each group.
  - Consideration should be given to extending the frequency and models of providing formative feedback to further guide and support learning.
  - Management should review the time provision and timetable arrangements to ensure all students have appropriate access to Physical Education.
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## INTRODUCTION

St Raphaela's is a voluntary secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 510 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of learning and teaching in the lessons observed was uniformly good, with exemplary practice noted in all lessons.
- Lessons had a positive and productive atmosphere. Music was used on occasion, which provided an additional and motivating stimulus. Students were regularly affirmed for their engagement, efforts and progress, with a respectful rapport evident in all interactions.
- Commendable efforts were made to include students who were unable to participate in the practical activities. Teachers should build on the range of approaches, such as peer teaching or umpiring, as appropriate, to support students' cognitive engagement in the physical education process.
- The focused physical activity, theme and specific learning outcomes of lessons were appropriately discussed and contextualised with students at the outset. This effective practice was augmented in some lessons by using video excerpts to exemplify specific skills or sequences of movement. Of particular note were the explicit use of relevant vocabulary and the use of questioning and discussion to improve students' comprehension.
- Initial warm-up routines were comprehensive and appropriately paced. In one lesson, some students were given responsibility to act as coaches and were required to design and lead their peers in a warm-up routine. The subsequent processing of these tasks by the teacher, challenged students to explain and justify their selection of activities. The extension of this highly effective practice, whenever appropriate, is recommended.
- There was an emphasis on reinforcing efficient body management skills through dynamic and functional movements in some lessons. The continued systematic focus on this area, particularly with younger students, is recommended to build students' movement competency and confidence.
- Developmental tasks were effectively organised to optimise students' engagement and to scaffold their acquisition and application of relevant motor skills. Good efforts were made to adopt and implement elements of the *Games for Understanding* and *Sport Education* instructional models to support students' learning in games.
- When used, demonstrations were of a high quality and provided students with visual representation of the relevant key performance indicators in executing the focused skills and movement sequences. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that teachers extend the frequency and models of providing formative feedback to support and guide students' learning.

- Most students made good progress in acquiring the focused skills and in developing their understanding of how these skills are applied in their relevant contexts. For some students the transitions from unopposed skill-acquisition drills to game-related play proved challenging. In such instances, additional conditioned practices that integrate and build students' movement and skill competencies and confidence should be considered.
- Learning outcomes were revisited at the end of the lessons and were effective in consolidating students' learning.
- Good consideration has been given to developing the assessment process. The inclusion of tasks such as topic-specific projects, a physical activity log and the development of a personal fitness profile, provides a good focus for learning and assessment in some year groups. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that a number of key assessment milestones be identified for each year group. These should be based on identified learning outcomes and underpinned by relevant criteria.
- Recording of participation is well developed, with reporting to parents in line with school policy.

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

- With the exception of reduced time provision in third year and the modular provision in fifth year, the time provision is adequate to support the organisation and delivery of the physical education programmes in the school. Management should review the current arrangements and work to ensure that all students have appropriate access and timetable provision for physical education.
- Engagement in professional development is promoted and facilitated by management. There has been good involvement by members of the department in a range of internal and external initiatives and courses related to teaching, learning and assessment and to the organisation and delivery of the subject.
- The high quality external facilities support a range of activities, while the indoor hall is adequate to support the delivery of the planned programmes of work. The lack of suitable storage space is a challenge for the physical education department.
- There is very good commitment to supporting students' engagement in physical activity and sport. Exemplary efforts are made to provide a diverse extra-curricular sport and physical activities programme. A range of initiatives and events, such as health and fitness week, provide a positive association between physical activity and wellbeing. Photographic displays on dedicated noticeboards and on the school's website promote and affirm students' participation and achievements.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A collaborative and collegial approach is taken to the subject department planning process. The subject plan appropriately documents all elements of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school.

- The junior cycle programme is largely in line with syllabus requirements. Commendable efforts are made to incorporate a diverse range of activities to suit the interests of senior cycle students. For example, the TY fitness module and senior cycle modules on Zumba dance and Yoga, provide students with opportunities to develop their competency in, and understanding of, rhythm and movement and their functionality.
  - A number of detailed schemes of work have been developed to support the delivery of the programmes of work. To build on the work to date, it is recommended that the physical education department identify key learning outcomes for each year group. This will provide an incremental approach to support students' development, and provide greater coherence between the various strands of the programme and the assessment process.
  - The subject department is well resourced with sufficient equipment to support teaching and learning, including information and communications technology (ICT).
  - A number of posters, projects and specific vocabulary were displayed in the sports hall. This is very good practice and is also in keeping with a whole-school approach to supporting students' literacy and numeracy development. Specific themes and skills common to other curricular subjects have also been identified and documented.
  - Attention is paid to health and safety issues in the subject plan, underpinned by a risk assessment audit.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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.