

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT**

**Newtown School,
Newtown Road, Waterford
Roll number: 65010R**

Date of inspection: 06 May 2014



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	06 May 2014
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 three lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.
- Learning took place in a very positive and supportive atmosphere.
- Students were actively engaged and fully included in purposeful, developmental and enjoyable tasks.
- Very good facilities and resources are available to support the delivery of the subject and the extra-curricular physical activity and sports programmes.
- Sport and physical activity play a central role in school life, with an exemplary approach to promoting participation and achievement.
- Subject department and individual planning are of a good quality, and a broad and balanced physical education programme has been developed to meet the interests and needs of students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Management should review the time provision and arrangements for the subject at senior cycle, and work to ensure that all students have appropriate access to physical education in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills.
 - Consideration should be given to devolving additional responsibility to students to lead elements of their lessons.
 - The further development of the assessment process should focus on identifying a number of tasks, based on established criteria, and aligned to the stated learning outcomes for each year group.
-

INTRODUCTION

Newtown School is a co-educational secondary school, guided by a Quaker ethos, with a current enrolment of 282 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of learning and teaching in the lessons observed was very good.
- Lessons took place in an inclusive, supportive and affirming atmosphere, underpinned by an excellent rapport between teacher and students. Students displayed a positive attitude towards physical activity and sport, with very high levels of participation in the lessons observed.
- All lessons were very well planned. Class organisation was highly efficient, with the necessary equipment and materials available to support active participation and learning.
- The content and direction of lessons was shared with students at the outset. Expectations for students' participation and progress were also established. Consideration should also be given to explicitly identifying the transferable movement patterns, concepts or principles inherent in the focused activity. This should aim to contextualise the relevancy of the planned tasks to support students' engagement, understanding and functionality.
- Initial warm-up activities were appropriately structured and paced, which ensured students were well prepared for more intense activity. It also gave them sufficient opportunities to practise previously learned skills and movement patterns.
- Practical lessons had a very good commitment to engaging students in moderate-to-vigorous physical activity. In one lesson, students demonstrated high levels of application, persistence and functional capacity, when completing a challenging interval-training task. Some students demonstrated outstanding levels of fitness and very good technical proficiency in the applied tasks.
- The developmental tasks were purposeful and progressive and included, supported and challenged students of all abilities. Skill acquisition tasks were well-structured, with ample equipment and opportunities for practise in unopposed, conditioned and applied contexts.
- Demonstrations were of a good quality, both in their execution and clarity of explanations. Key performance indicators were clearly highlighted, which provided students with the visual and kinaesthetic cues to inform their learning.
- Individual, paired tasks or small-sided conditioned games ensured all students had sufficient opportunities to practise and apply their skills in the game context. Questioning was used effectively, both by the teacher and, at times by students, which served to deepen and consolidate their learning.
- A number of strategies were effectively used to enhance students' information-processing and cognitive engagement in the tasks. Consideration should be given to devolving

additional responsibility to students to lead elements of their lessons, such as the warm-up and developmental tasks, when appropriate.

- Developmental feedback, to individuals and class groups, was a common feature of lessons and provided good guidance for future learning.
- Recording of participation and progress is well developed, with regular formative reports sent to parents. Some very good work has been undertaken in developing the assessment process. Engaging students in project work, self-assessment and peer-assessment and the incorporation of personal profile tasks, supports a positive approach to the assessment process. To consolidate this work, it is recommended that specific assessment tasks, along with assessment criteria, be identified for each year group.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The time provision and timetable arrangements for first year and TY classes are in line with the recommendations of the Department, while the time provision for second year and third-year classes is adequate to support a comprehensive physical education programme. Management should review the current optional arrangements at senior cycle and the lack of provision for students following the LCVP. It is best practice that all students are provided with formal tuition in Physical Education.
- The physical education programmes are organised and taught by a highly committed teacher. Continuing professional development (CPD) is encouraged by management and valued by the teacher. Of particular note is the willingness to engage in mentoring undergraduate students of Physical Education, and the facilitation of their placement in the school.
- The facilities, to support the delivery of the physical education and extra-curricular programmes, are exemplary and very well maintained. The swimming pool and fitness suite provide an excellent facility to support students to learn lifelong skills and to develop their physical capacity.
- The subject department is well resourced with sufficient equipment to support teaching and learning, including access to information and communications technology (ICT). Consideration should be given to the purchase of a number of additional pedometers, heart-rate monitors and tablet computers to further support learning.
- Participation in exercise, sport and physical activity is very well provided through the extra-curricular programme. The “Clan System” is an innovative approach to motivate students to engage in regular physical activities and games that support the achievements of their “Clan”. The positive impact of students’ participation in sport and physical activity is highly valued by all. Observations of a “Clan” athletics event during the inspection confirmed the exceptionally positive role this system plays in the holistic development of the individual and in the social fabric of the school. The success of the extra-curricular programme is a great credit to the commitment and enthusiasm of management, staff and students.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well advanced. The subject plan documents all aspects of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school. The design and delivery of the programme is informed through reflective practice, with a good emphasis on optimising inclusion and participation.
- Very good efforts are made to provide all strands of the syllabus. A range of detailed schemes of work is available to guide the implementation of each activity strand. To build on this good work, consideration should be given to identifying a small number of overarching learning outcomes for each year group. This will help to provide greater coherence between the various activity strands and will ensure a developmental approach to support students as they grow and mature. It will also further inform the assessment process.
- The provision of co-curricular activities, such as trips to outdoor education centres, further students' Physical Education and exposes them to a diversity of additional recreational and challenging physical activities. The provision of choice at senior cycle is good practice as it increases ownership and engagement in the programme of work.
- The physical education department should strengthen the current health and safety practice, by including a comprehensive risk assessment audit of facilities, procedures and practice.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school welcomes this report which highlights the very good standard of teaching and learning that takes place in the Physical Education Department. It also highlights the central role that sport and physical activities play in the life of the school and the “exemplary approach to promoting participation and achievement”. The school would like to commend all the staff involved in the P.E. Department and those involved in extracurricular activities.

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

With regard to the recommendations, the school management has started the process of reviewing the provision of Physical Education at Senior Cycle.
The PE department will continue with the work in developing the assessment process for each year group.