

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT**

**Loreto High School
Grange Rd, Rathfarnham
Dublin 14
Roll number: 60340N**

Date of inspection: 11 May 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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	11 May 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussions 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

- The quality of learning and teaching was very good in the lessons observed, and a culture of participation and enjoyment pervades the physical education programme in the school.
- High quality planning and preparation ensured that lessons were purposeful and progressive and optimised learning through the effective use of appropriate teaching practices.
- With the exception of third-year class groups, the timetable provision and arrangements support the delivery of a comprehensive physical education programme.
- Excellent facilities are available to support the delivery of the physical education and extra-curricular physical activity and sports programmes.
- Participation in physical activity and sport are highly valued by the school community and exemplary structures and supports are made available to optimise all students' involvement.
- Subject department planning is well advanced and informed by reflective practice, which has resulted in a broad and balanced physical education programme.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Management should address the shortfall in timetable provision for third-year class groups and continue to optimise the time provision for Physical Education in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills.
 - Future planning should focus on identifying specific learning outcomes for each year group and align these with the assessment process.
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INTRODUCTION

Loreto High School is a voluntary secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 618 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of learning and teaching was very good in the lessons observed. The quality of lessons was enhanced by high levels of prior preparation, by well-structured and efficiently paced tasks and by high expectations for students' engagement and progress.
- All lessons had a very good atmosphere and were characterised by positive and affirming interactions. Students approached their lessons with enthusiasm and made good progress in developing their competency and understanding of the focused topics. From the interactions observed, and the approach of students to their lessons, it was evident that a culture of participation and enjoyment pervades the physical education programme in the school.
- Following a brief introduction to the content and direction of lessons, teachers also established the learning intentions. This good practice provided students with a focus for their learning and enhanced their understanding of the lesson's purpose and tasks.
- Initial warm-up activities were appropriately structured and paced to ensure students were physiologically ready and psychologically focused for the developmental phase of the lesson. Good attention was paid during the warm-up to highlighting basic anatomy and physiological principles and there was effective use of topic specific terminology. Responsibility was devolved to some students to lead stretching exercises, which is good practice and this should be extended whenever possible.
- The structure of developmental tasks helped to scaffold students' acquisition and application of motor skills and to develop their understanding of the underlying concepts. Fundamental movements were effectively integrated with sport specific skills in a tennis lesson, which supported students to develop their ability to serve, play a co-operative rally and a competitive game. Similarly, both physical and social concepts were explicitly highlighted in an orienteering lesson, which progressed from simple individual tasks to more complex team-based problem-solving tasks.
- A range of effective approaches was taken to enhance students' learning. When used, demonstration was of a good quality and provided students with visual references to support the correct execution of the focused skills. To build on this good work, teachers should continue to reinforce basic biomechanics to further students' awareness and their ability to move as efficiently and effectively as possible. All lessons had a good commitment to questioning which helped to develop students' understanding of the execution of the focused skills and activities. The integration of peer-observation and assessment tasks was also very well utilised in one lesson to elicit students' understanding and to support their ability to analyse performance. The further extension of this effective practice, where appropriate, should be considered.
- Ample equipment was available to optimise students' engagement and a good selection of resources was used to support their learning. The use of task sheets, observation sheets and recording sheets ensured that students documented their engagement and learning.
- Recording of participation is well developed. Formative assessment is an integral component of all lessons. Good progress has been made to develop a coherent approach to the overall assessment process in physical education. Reporting to parents is well developed in line with school policy.
- Consideration should be given to the establishment of student portfolio folders as a means for students to document and retain a record of their engagement and learning. The

establishment of key assessment milestones for each year group will help to further develop the overall approach to assessment.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The time provision for the majority of classes for physical education is sufficient to support the delivery of a comprehensive physical education programme. However, management should aim to address the shortfall for third-year students and work to provide the subject for all students in line with the recommendations of the Department. The concurrent timetable arrangements for senior cycle students allow for a broad range of activities that support students' choice. Care should continue to be taken to ensure that modules delivered by external coaches, or activity providers, are in line with the educational objectives of the senior cycle programme.
- Physical Education is valued by management. This is exemplified by the development and maintenance of the excellent facilities, the provision of an extensive array of resources and equipment to support the delivery of the subject and by the encouragement and support for the continuing professional development of teachers.
- Positive attitudes to physical activity, exercise and sport are fostered and supported through an extensive extra-curricular programme. In addition, participation in physical activity is positively associated with a number of school events and occasions. Exemplary efforts have been made to create links with local clubs through the sharing of facilities and engaging coaching services. Pathways to facilitate all students' involvement in physical activity and sport are provided through a number of exemplary practices and initiatives. The extra-curricular programme is very well organised and strives to accommodate the diversity of students' physical activity and sporting interests.
- The involvement of students in assisting with organising, coaching and officiating in elements of the sports programmes further augments and consolidates their learning in Physical Education.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is well advanced and a comprehensive subject plan has been developed, which documents all aspects of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school.
- A collaborative approach is taken to the planning process. The design and delivery of the programme is informed through reflective practice.
- Schemes of work developed for the junior cycle programme provide a good overview of the progressive approach taken to support students' learning. To build on this very good practice, consideration should be given to identifying the key learning outcomes for each year group. This will provide greater coherence between the various strands of the syllabus, provide a developmental focus whenever external coaches or providers are used to augment the programme and provide a focus for the assessment process.
- Good attention is paid to health and safety in the subject plan.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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