

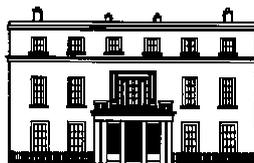
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT**

**Ashton School,
Blackrock Road, Cork.
Roll number: 81008W**

Date of inspection: 10 March 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

Date of inspection	10 March 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 six class periods• Feedback to principal and physical education teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching observed was consistently good, with some excellent practice noted.
- Students were interested in the subject matter of the lessons and participated enthusiastically.
- A positive, affirming atmosphere was a feature of all lessons.
- The excellent quality of lesson planning and preparation observed was a significant aid to students' learning.
- A very good use of questioning by teachers and aspects of assessment for learning (AfL) were noted. Students' questioning also indicated high levels of engagement and understanding as well as the ability to apply learning.
- Physical Education has a healthy status in the school, lead by the school's physical education teachers. A large number of members of staff are also involved in delivering the school's extensive extra-curricular physical activity programme, involving many students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The provision of separate physical education activities for boys and girls should be kept under regular review to ensure this arrangement is underpinned by a sound educational rationale and that it continues to meet the evolving needs of the school's students.
 - Greater use of the rich task approach and other strategies to increase student autonomy in the learning process are recommended.
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INTRODUCTION

Ashton School is a co-educational school under the joint patronage of the Church of Ireland Bishop of Cork, Cloyne and Ross and the Cork Education and Training Board (ETB). The school has a current enrolment of 511 students, slightly more than half of whom are boys. The school offers the traditional Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes to students as well as an optional Transition Year (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching observed was consistently good, with some examples of excellent practice observed.
- A good variety of appropriate teaching methodologies was observed in all lessons. Teachers' explanations were clear and precise and enabled students to understand the tasks that were set and to participate fully.
- A very good use of questioning strategies was noted, with an appropriate mix of directed and general questions, and higher and lower-order questions being used. These were successfully used both to check students' understanding and to reinforce learning. The quality of questioning by students indicated a very good level of understanding, an ability to apply learning and a high level of engagement.
- An excellent rapport between teachers and students was a feature of all lessons. Students were active and well engaged by the tasks set and co-operated fully with their teachers and with each other. The atmosphere in all lessons was very positive and students' behaviour was excellent.
- Very good use of aspects of assessment for learning (AfL) was observed during all lessons. This involved the sharing of learning outcomes with students at the start of lessons, together with focussed recapping and reinforcing of learning objectives at the end of lessons. Opportunities which were provided for students to engage in peer assessment and reflection were particularly praiseworthy and were expertly handled by teachers.
- As a further development of the use of AfL, the use of a rich task approach, especially with older students, should be considered. This would provide students with opportunities to take more responsibility for their own learning and become more autonomous learners. It would also allow students to demonstrate higher-order skills such as analysis, synthesis and evaluation and could extend the very good assessment practices, which were a feature of lessons, to include an annual assessment of practical performance in Physical Education.
- Very good reporting practices are in place to report on the participation and progress of students in physical education lessons. The system of reporting with regard to the participation of students in extra-curricular activities and the Sports Assembly Day are particularly praiseworthy. This reflects the value which the school places on such activities, with very high levels of participation noted among students in activities such as sponsored walks, the Cork City Marathon and wheelchair basketball, for example. The generous commitment of many members of staff to the provision of these activities for students is greatly valued and actively promoted by management.
- The emphasis which teachers placed on the correct use of key terms was an aid to students' oral literacy, while calculations which students were asked to make in relation

to world record times in athletics and points scored during a health-related activity lesson helped to develop numeracy skills.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Physical Education has a very healthy status in the school and is very well supported by management. All classes have access to a double period of Physical Education each week and all lessons are taken by the school's two qualified, highly committed physical education teachers.
- Currently, concurrent timetabling of the school's two physical education teachers allows two classes from the same year group to be timetabled simultaneously for Physical Education. This has allowed for the provision of separate activities in physical education lessons for boys and girls. This takes place for all year groups with the exception of TY. As the school is a co-educational school, the provision of separate physical education activities for boys and girls should be kept under regular review to ensure this arrangement is underpinned by a sound educational rationale and that it continues to meet the evolving needs of the school's students.
- The physical education facilities available in the school are excellent and include two astro-turf pitches, a grass pitch and a general purpose area. The new physical education hall, recently refurbished as part of the redevelopment of the school, has been a significant addition to the school's physical education facilities. In addition to these facilities, the school also makes occasional use of locally available facilities such as the local swimming pool and gym.
- The physical education department is very well resourced and all equipment needed for the provision of a broad and balanced physical education programme is available. The provision of a portable data projector would be of benefit to the department if one could be provided. This would facilitate the showing of the many video clips and other resource materials that the department has collated.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A very good, detailed subject plan, which is informed by the school's ethos, is in place.
- Individual lessons benefitted from diligent, thoughtful planning and the use of a wide range of resource materials was planned for all lessons. This included the use of video clips, task cards, charts and other materials, in addition to the school's physical education equipment. The appropriate use of these resources was a significant aid to students' learning.
- As the school has recently undergone a significant redevelopment which has included a major upgrade of its physical education facilities, an update to the school's health and safety statement to include a safety audit and risk assessment in Physical Education is suggested. Such an assessment should be reviewed annually.
- Activities planned throughout all years ensure access to a broad, balanced physical education programme for students. The school is particularly commended for its willingness to access locally available facilities to extend the range of possible activities for students.

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.

Published June 2014