

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Athboy Community School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Athboy County Meath |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 91517D |

Date of Inspection: 16-03-2017



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Physical Education under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

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| Date(s) of inspection | 16-03-2017 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• 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, deputy principal and relevant staff |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Athboy Community School is a co-educational post-primary school catering for a current enrolment of 618 students. It offers the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes as well as an optional Transition Year (TY). Physical Education (PE) is a compulsory subject for all students in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- High levels of student engagement were observed in the majority of lessons; however, the predominantly teacher-led style of instruction noted in some lessons limited the opportunity for student leadership to be developed.
- Subject provision is good with all students in junior cycle and senior cycle receiving a double period of PE per week.
- The facilities and resources available for the teaching of PE are very good.
- The overall quality of subject planning is good; currently, however, not all strands of the junior-cycle curriculum are being delivered.
- Discussions at subject department meetings have focussed mainly on curriculum content and subject resources.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Strategies to increase student leadership during each lesson, at an age appropriate level, should be introduced across all year groups.
- The range of activities provided in Junior Cycle should be reviewed in order to include all strands of the physical education curriculum.
- The assessment plan for each year group should include a formalised practical performance assessment task.
- Planning meetings should, on occasion, include a focus on aspects of teaching and learning relevant to PE.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- Students, in most lessons, engaged enthusiastically in a variety of learning activities that provided appropriate challenges and allowed them to work independently, in pairs and in small groups.
- High levels of activity were observed in the majority of lessons. During some lessons, there was scope for higher levels of student activity. Teachers should, when planning lessons, give consideration to how activity levels can be maintained during each phase of the lesson.
- In a senior-cycle health-related fitness lesson, differentiation was seamlessly integrated throughout with challenging opportunities provided for each student. There was scope in other lessons to provide for additional differentiated activities.
- Well-established classroom routines were in evidence in all lessons. These routines were a significant aid to effective lesson management. Students assisted with the distribution, setting up and storage of equipment at the start and end of lessons and co-operated fully with their teachers throughout.
- Very good assessment-for-learning (AfL) techniques were observed in a junior-cycle games lesson. It was very good practice that students had an opportunity to reflect on their own learning from the lesson and to share that learning with a peer.
- Teacher questioning was used effectively in the majority of lessons as a formative assessment strategy. Students responded readily to questions and demonstrated a clear interest in, and good knowledge of, the topic at hand.
- A significant minority of lessons were dominated by teacher-led activities. In order to increase student confidence, teachers should, when planning lessons, provide opportunities for student leadership to be incorporated in an age-appropriate manner.
- As part of the whole-school literacy strategy, key words were highlighted and reinforced in all junior-cycle lessons. There is scope to further develop elements of numeracy in the physical education setting.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is good. All students receive a double period of PE for the full school year. However, the practice of co-timetabling classes from different year groups hinders the implementation of the full curriculum; a review of co-timetabling arrangements should be undertaken by school management.
- Consideration should be given to increasing the provision for TY students to a minimum of three periods to allow for the introduction of a wider range of learning opportunities in this programme.
- Extensive indoor and outdoor facilities are available for the teaching and learning of PE. The department is well resourced with a wide range of equipment available to support teaching and learning.
- A broad range of extra-curricular activities is available to students. Basketball, camogie, Gaelic football, hurling, rugby and soccer are the main team sports catered for, while

athletics and tae kwon do are also offered. This commitment to the provision of extra-curricular activities by both staff and management is commended.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of subject planning is good. However, the range of activities planned at junior cycle should be reviewed to ensure that all curricular strands are delivered. It is recommended that the PE department explore the options available to incorporate the aquatics and adventure activities strands into their future plans.
- Schemes of work have been planned for each year group. As part of the department review of their subject plan, it would be useful to select one template for compiling future schemes.
- Individual lessons were well planned with opportunities for student reflection built into the majority of lessons. An extension of such reflection practice by students, to include the recording of students' learning at certain stages throughout each block of work, is worthy of consideration.
- PE teachers keep detailed records of students' participation and attainment for each block of work. It is recommended that a culminating assessment event, where students' physical performance can be evaluated, be incorporated into at least one block of work each year.
- Department meetings are held regularly. Discussions at subject department meetings have focussed mainly on curriculum content and subject resources. Planning meetings should, on occasion, include a focus on aspects of teaching and learning relevant to PE.

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.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school welcomes this report which accurately reflects the high standard of teaching and learning, modern teaching facilities, and the wide range of extra-curricular activities currently available in the school.

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

Strategies to increase student leadership will be encouraged. Attempts will be made to increase the range of activities in the Junior Cycle curriculum, to include practical performance assessment and adventure activities. Discussion at planning meetings will be broadened to include aspects of Teaching and Learning. Where possible, co-timetabling of different year groups will be minimised.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality the school's provision of each area.

| Level | Description | Example of descriptive terms |
|---------------------|---|---|
| Very Good | Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision. | Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary |
| Good | Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard. | Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement |
| Satisfactory | Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard. | Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas |
| Fair | Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better. | Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve |
| Weak | Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements. | Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties; |