

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballymakenny College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballymakenny Road Drogheda County Louth
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91573N

Date of Inspection: 14-09-2017



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. Teaching, learning 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

Date(s) of inspection	14 September 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Ballymakenny College was established in 2014 as a co-educational community school under the shared patronage of the Louth Meath Education and Training Board, and Educate Together. The school currently provides the Junior Certificate and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme for a student body of 492 boys and girls.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- Opportunities for the development of the student voice were observed in a small number of lessons; there was scope for further development of this practice in others.
- Good levels of differentiation were observed in most lessons; in some lessons there was scope to further differentiate learning in order to challenge the more able students.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Physical Education (PE) is good.
- Subject planning is of a very high quality with an online collaborative platform used to good effect to ensure planning documents remain up-to-date and relevant.
- The PE department is highly committed and dedicated to providing positive learning experiences for students; its commitment to continuous professional development and reflective practice is commended

Recommendations

- The PE department should plan to provide incrementally appropriate opportunities for all students to develop their leadership skills in lessons.
- Teachers should, when planning lessons, give greater consideration to students' prior learning to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for students.
- The PE department should continue to review its subject plan in order to respond to the additional time allocation for first-year students in 2017 and the planned introduction of senior-cycle PE in 2018.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good with some examples of exemplary practice noted.
- Very good reflective practice was observed in a junior games lesson; students were provided with multiple opportunities to reflect on their learning experience. This valuable practice should be further deepened and embedded into future lessons.
- A variety of teaching methodologies was used to good effect in a senior-cycle lesson to encourage students to take responsibility for their own learning. Students were provided with opportunities to work individually, in pairs and in small groups on age appropriate and challenging tasks.
- The quality of learning, manifest in high levels of student activity, was good in all lessons. Students were very engaged by the tasks set and participated with enthusiasm and interest.
- Questioning, as an assessment strategy, was used frequently and appropriately in all lessons observed. Students were encouraged to pose questions during lessons and their responses to questions indicated a good level of understanding of the topic at hand.
- A small number of students were provided with an opportunity to take on a leadership role during observed lessons. This good practice, of developing student leadership in the class, should be planned appropriately and incorporated into lessons for all year groups.
- Literacy and numeracy development were incorporated into all lessons. Technical language was reinforced correctly and the pre-teaching of relevant key words was a significant aid to student learning. In a junior-cycle Health Related Fitness lesson, every student had an opportunity to participate in a task that developed numerical concepts. The seamless manner in which these skills are included into lessons was indicative of very good practice.
- Good levels of differentiation were observed in most lessons with a variety of activities selected to develop students' skills and knowledge in the relevant curricular areas. There was scope to further differentiate the learning in some lessons in order to challenge the more-able students. Teachers should, when planning lessons, give greater consideration to students' prior learning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support is good; junior-cycle provision is in line with the requirements of Circular 0015/2017. TY students have very good provision with modules of Sports Psychology, Sports Science and Sports Coaching provided in addition to their weekly PE lesson as part of their programme.
- Teachers are appropriately deployed in line with their qualifications.
- Excellent, well-maintained facilities are available to support the teaching and learning of PE in the school. The PE department make very good use of their full-sized sports hall and fitness suite and hope to be in a position to utilise a new pitch area in the coming school year.
- Students have access to a wide range of extra-curricular activities including team activities such as basketball, camogie, Gaelic football, rugby, soccer, as well as individual activities such as athletics and fitness lessons. The voluntary involvement of staff and the support of management for these initiatives is praiseworthy.

- PE is included on all formal school reports to parents with very affirming, personalised comments recorded for each student. To enhance this commendable practice, the PE department should develop a practice by which the reporting of a practical physical performance can be incorporated into the reporting process.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is very good; the use of a collaborative ICT platform provides a very effective mechanism for maintaining an up-to-date planning document.
- The PE programme for junior-cycle students is well balanced with provision for four different modules of work each year. The school has added a second one-hour lesson for first-year students; the PE department is continuing to explore the impact this extra time will have on the subject plan for junior cycle.
- Schemes of work in all curricular areas are well developed. Annual plans for each year group have been designed to respond to the learning needs of the students. As the school grows and adds a full senior-cycle programme to its provision, the PE department should consider how to plan for suitably progressive learning activities to accommodate the interests of senior-cycle students.
- Individual lessons were well planned; the clear structure and routine to each lesson, including the sharing of learning intentions with students at the start of each lesson and reviewing them at the end, are a significant aid to students' learning.
- The PE department, supported by school management, shows a commitment to continuous professional development and reflective practice that is commended.

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 Board of Management of Ballymakenny College has reviewed the Inspection Report in Physical Education that was conducted on the 14th of September, 2017 by the Department of Education and Skills (DES).

The Board welcomes the observations made in the report, in particular that there was a variety of teaching methodologies used to good effect; very good reflective practice observed; good levels of differentiation and exemplary practice in the quality of teaching and learning in some of the classes.

The report also stated that *“the PE department is highly committed and dedicated to providing positive learning experiences for students and that its commitment to continuous professional development and reflective practice is commended.* The Board welcomes this observation.

The Board is pleased that the excellent work that is carried out on a daily basis by the teachers in the PE department and indeed the voluntary involvement of staff and the support of school management in the provision of a wide range of extra-curricular activities was observed.

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

Recommendation

The PE department should plan to provide incrementally appropriate opportunities for all students to develop their leadership skills in lessons.

Through group work in lessons, more leadership opportunities will open up for more students. Students, on a rotational basis, will be given the opportunity to lead class drills, warm ups, cool downs and to give instruction to the class.

Teachers should, when planning lessons, give greater consideration to students’ prior learning to ensure an appropriate level of challenge for students.

The PE department will design a set of additional tasks, modified games and drills to challenge the more skilled/advanced students.

The PE department should continue to review its subject plan in order to respond to the additional time allocation for first-year students in 2017 and the planned introduction of senior-cycle PE in 2018.

Through subject planning meetings and the JCT Professional Development Time and taking full cognisance of the new Junior Cycle curriculum, planning for the additional allocation in 1st year will continue on an ongoing basis throughout the year. The PE department will avail of all in-service offered by JCT and the DES in relation to all new curricular developments and senior cycle programmes.

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 of 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;