



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Physical Education

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Mount St Michael
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Rosscarbery Co Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62470N
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	20-09-2022
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	29/11/2022

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(s) 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 of the school 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	20-09-2022
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of subject planning documentation and other relevant documents• Discussions with principal, deputy principal and relevant staff	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with students• Observation of teaching and learning during two double-period lessons• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff.

School context

Mount Saint Michael Secondary School is a co-educational school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school had an enrolment of 341 students in the current school year, slightly more than half of whom were boys. Eight students were enrolled in the school's special class, St. Michael's. The school offered the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) as well as the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in all of the lessons observed with some excellent practice noted.
- Students were well engaged, active and achieved very well in their physical education lessons and the very positive atmosphere was a notable feature of all lessons.
- Subject provision for Physical Education was very good and the subject was well resourced and appropriately timetabled.
- A very good range of activities has been planned as part of the delivery of Physical Education in the school and individual lessons were well planned.
- Overall subject planning was good, with some minor scope for development noted.
- Very good collaborative practice was observed among the physical education teachers and the use of peer observation of each other's lessons was particularly commended.

Recommendations

- While the quality of teacher demonstrations of skills to be learned was very good, teachers should ensure a focus on the key points of skill development, particularly when a new skill is being taught.
- Although the subject plan was comprehensive in most areas, the physical education department should include a developmental section to the plan, outlining the short-term, medium-term and long-term goals for the development of the subject in the school.
- In order to further extend the opportunities provided for student autonomy in learning, the physical education department should provide scope for increased student input into the physical education programme, particularly at senior cycle.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching was good in all lessons observed with some examples of excellent practice. The very positive lesson atmosphere, helped by the enjoyable, interesting tasks set by the teacher, was a notable feature of all lessons.
- Student learning was very good in all lessons and students co-operated fully with their teacher and with each other at all times. Students demonstrated a very good ability to work independently, in pairs and in small groups as required. The enthusiasm with which they participated in all practices, drills and games was clearly evident and reflected the very positive relationships and attitude to learning created by the teacher.
- Student outcomes were very good. Students were active and interested in their learning and achieved to a very high level in all the activities set. The facilitation of student choice was a notable feature of the lessons observed and this helped students to take ownership of their learning and had a clearly positive impact on their engagement in the learning process. This practice was highly commended.
- Students demonstrated a very good ability to recall learning from previous lessons and gave very good responses to questioning. They also regularly volunteered questions of their own when needed, indicating good cognitive engagement with the learning tasks.
- While the quality of teacher demonstrations of discrete skills was excellent, on occasion a clearer focus on the key points of the skills being taught would have been of particular benefit to students whose skill levels were lower. This attention to detail is recommended and is particularly important when a new skill is being learned.
- All lessons had a very clear structure and benefitted from very good planning. There was a clear purpose to all tasks set in lessons, including a very good progression in difficulty which challenged the more able students. Recapping by the teacher at the end of lessons was very well handled, incorporating some questioning and setting the context for future lessons. These strategies were useful in consolidating learning and helping students to see each lesson as part of a coherent block of learning.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Subject provision for Physical Education was very good and the subject was well resourced and appropriately timetabled. All students in the school had access to a double-period of Physical Education each week and the school offered the Junior Cycle Physical Education (JCPE) programme as well as the Senior Cycle Physical Education (SCPE) framework. The school was open to the possibility of offering Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) at some point in the future should there be sufficient demand among students and if it can be accommodated within the school's option blocks.
- Two, qualified physical education teachers were in charge of the delivery of the subject in the school, one of whom worked with the school's special class, St. Michaels.
- The facilities available for the teaching and learning of the subject were very good and were maintained to a very good standard. The physical education department was commended for incrementally upgrading the range of equipment available in the school's fitness suite.
- A very good range of assessment modes was in use by the physical education department including peer assessment, self assessment, and continuous assessment. It was particularly commendable that formal assessment of practical performances took place at the end of some blocks of learning and that the outcomes of these assessments were used by the department to modify learning outcomes as required.
- There was a very good level of extra-curricular physical activities provided in the school which complemented learning during physical education lessons.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning in Physical Education in the school was good. A very good range of activities has been planned as part of the delivery of the subject and the fact that this included aquatics was particularly beneficial to students as this activity is not typically available to many post-primary schools.
- Individual lessons were well planned and students were clearly familiar with the very good lesson routines, including thorough warm-up and cool-down sessions, which were used. These routines ensured that all lessons progressed smoothly and that time available was used efficiently.
- Very good collaborative practices and co-operation were evident among the physical education teachers. The occasional use of peer observation of each other's lessons was particularly commended as being indicative of a highly reflective approach to teaching.
- The subject plan, while comprehensive and well considered in most areas, would benefit from a developmental section, outlining the short-term, medium-term and long-term priorities for the development of Physical Education in the school. Such developmental planning could be included as an agenda item for department meetings where progress in the realisation of the stated priorities could be considered.
- It was noted, and commended, that the subject plan referenced the wish to provide students with increased responsibility for their own learning as they get older. It is recommended that this include providing students, particularly at senior cycle, with some scope to influence the range of activities in which they participate as is provided for in the SCPE framework.
- Very good plans were in place for cross-curricular collaboration with other subject departments in the school, most notably with regard to the school's wellbeing week.
- An excellent rationale has been documented for the use of fitness testing as part of physical education lessons. This focused on the provision of developmental feedback to individual students regarding their changing levels of fitness as they mature and, commendably, avoided the use of maximal tests of aerobic endurance.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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 of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

Subject plans will be updated to include developmental section-outlining plans for PE for the future with particular emphasis on the new Junior Cycle PE plan for potentially having LCPE and a broader range of activities in PE generally. Student input will be sought and taken on board when addressing the above also.