

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Tarbert Comprehensive School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Tarbert Listowel Co Kerry
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	81006S

Date of Inspection: 27-10-2017



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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	27-10-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussions with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Tarbert Comprehensive School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the diocese of Kerry with an enrolment of 527 students in the current school year. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) to its students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was very good and a good range of teaching methodologies was used by teachers to engage students in learning.
- High levels of student activity were evident in all lessons and teachers promoted very positive attitudes towards participation in physical activity.
- Very good opportunities for independent and self-directed learning were provided to students with minor scope for further development of these noted.
- Subject provision for Physical Education is good and the department is very well resourced and supported by school management.
- Planning in Physical Education is very good and the school is rightly proud of its achievement of the Active Schools Flag.
- Very good reporting practices are in place in the school and with minor scope to expand assessment practices suggested.

Recommendations

- Teachers should employ a more formal structure to the learning intentions associated with opportunities provided to senior cycle students for independent and self-directed learning.
- Consideration should be given to the assessment of practical performances to inform reporting in Physical Education.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was very good with few areas for development noted. The range of tasks set by teachers, as well as the range of teaching methodologies employed, ensured a positive, purposeful learning experience for students.
- Lessons were characterised by high levels of student activity and teachers consciously promoted positive attitudes to health and physical activity by relating learning to students' own lives and pointing out opportunities for involvement in sport and physical activity beyond the school.
- Many opportunities were provided for self-directed and independent learning, particularly to students in senior cycle. While such opportunities are highly commended, they would benefit from a more structured approach in order to maximise student learning. Therefore, a rich task approach where students take a range of leadership roles over a block of learning, culminating in a final performance and reflection on learning, is recommended.
- The level of performance exhibited by students in the lessons observed was very good. Carefully structured activities exhibited clear progression in difficulty, thereby facilitating all students to achieve success and also challenging the more able. Responses to questioning indicated a good level of knowledge and understanding among students.
- Interactions between teachers and students and between students themselves were very positive and students clearly enjoyed their lessons. Differentiation and student choice were facilitated as appropriate in the tasks set and, in senior cycle lessons, through allowing students to select particular activities.
- Questioning was well utilised to elicit learning and to consolidate learning through review of learning intentions at the start and end of lessons. It was suggested that more time be allocated to peer discussion and reflection at the end of team challenge activities.
- Good use of information and communications technology (ICT) was observed as students selected a dance routine and used a computer and data projector to display this as a learning aid for the class.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision is very good across almost all year groups. A double period, totalling eighty minutes is provided to the majority of year groups and TY students have a treble period of Physical Education. A short-term timetabling issue, a consequence of the school moving to forty-minute periods this year, has resulted in Physical Education not being timetabled to sixth year students. The school has indicated that this will be remedied in the coming school years.
- Physical Education is an evident priority for in-school management and the facilities available for the teaching of the subject are very good. Particularly commendable, is the fact that the school has recently built a large fitness suite adjacent to the main gymnasium. This area is used for activities such as circuit training, weight training, yoga and Pilates. Activities of this type can be particularly important in engaging students who are not interested in the more traditional activities, such as games.

- The physical education department is well resourced and all necessary equipment and materials are available for the delivery of a broad and balanced physical education programme.
- Very good reporting procedures are in place in Physical Education with reports being sent home twice per year for all year groups. Continuous assessment by observation as well as records of participation are used to inform reporting. It is recommended that the physical education department plan for an assessment of practical performance, approximately once per year for each class, to inform reporting in Physical Education. To complement the rich task approach suggested above, such an assessment event could feature success criteria agreed in advance between the teacher and students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation, both at whole-school and individual lesson level, is very good. Whole-school planning as part of the school's self-evaluation work (SSE) has seen the use of various assessment for learning (AfL) strategies promoted. The impact of these was clear with regard to the use of learning intentions and the focus on key words as appropriate in lessons.
- The school has recently been awarded the Active School Flag which provides well-deserved recognition for the comprehensive range of sport and physical activities which the school offers and the emphasis which the school places on the need to lead a healthy, active lifestyle. In this regard, the school's physical education merit awards, 'achievement board' and a range of physical education awards are highly commended in promoting the concept of physical activity for all.
- The efforts which the physical education department makes to take the views of students into account in developing a high quality physical education programme, including student surveys, are highly commended.
- The schools' physical education teachers collaborate very effectively with each other and regular formal and informal meetings are held, with minutes of formal meetings maintained.
- The physical education department uses a range of fitness tests to provide valuable information to students about their fitness levels across a range of parameters. It is important that such tests are underpinned by a developmental, rather than a competitive, focus whereby the emphasis is on helping the individual to understand their performance in relation to their own growth and maturation rather than in competition with their peers. This helps to ensure that learning, directly relevant to the development of each individual, rather than absolute performance and competition are emphasised as the main purpose of these fitness tests.
- A comprehensive subject plan is in place, outlining all aspects relevant to the delivery of Physical Education in the school. A broad range of activities is planned with aquatics being the only area which the school is currently unable to deliver at junior cycle. It is suggested that the length of some of the blocks of learning be extended somewhat to provide opportunities for sufficient depth of engagement. A broad range of activities, including aquatics, is planned for TY and it is noted, and commended, that a range of novel activities are provided in TY in keeping with the spirit and ethos of the TY programme. The only additional area which should be considered as part of the subject plan is a developmental section, outlining short-term, medium-term and long-term goals for the development of the subject in the school.

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. 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.

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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board wishes to acknowledge the very positive findings of this Physical Education inspection. In Particular, the Board is very pleased to note the:

- Overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was very good.
- Good range of teaching methodologies used by teachers to engage students in learning.
- High levels of student activity evident in all lessons
- Teachers' promotion of very positive attitudes towards participation in physical activity.
- Very good opportunities for independent and self-directed learning provided to students
- Subject provision for Physical Education is good
- PE Department is very well resourced and supported by school management.
- Planning in Physical Education is very good
- School is rightly proud of its achievement of the Active Schools Flag.
- Very good reporting practices in place in the school.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board also acknowledges the recommendations of this report.

- The Board and staff of Tarbert Comprehensive are fully committed to embedding Assessment for Learning (AFL) practices and the implementation of same within teaching and learning as part of the School Self Evaluation process, including strategies such as sharing learning intentions to assist independent and self-directed learning.
- Careful consideration will be given to the assessment of practical performances to inform reporting in Physical Education. This will be examined by the Physical Education department within the context of its overall assessment policy.