An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

# Subject Inspection: Physical Education
# Report

**REPORT**

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| Ainm na scoile/School name | Mary Immaculate Secondary School |
| Seoladh na scoile/School address | Lisdoonvarna<br>Co Clare |
| Uimhir rolla/Roll number | 62000W |
| Dáta na cigireachta/<br>Date of evaluation | 25-04-2023 |
| Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report | 05/10/2023 |

# 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 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: | |
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| *Child Protection* | *Anti-bullying* |
| 1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.<br>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.<br>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons. | 1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the *Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)* and this policy is reviewed annually.<br>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 *Procedures*) since the previous report to the board.<br>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/students. |

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

# Subject inspection

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| **Date of inspection** | 24 and 25 April 2023 |
| **Inspection activities undertaken**<br>• Review of relevant documents<br>• Discussion with principal and key staff<br>• Interaction with students, including focus groups | • Observation of teaching and learning during one lesson<br>• Examination of students' work<br>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

The focus of this subject inspection was on Junior Cycle Physical Education only.

## School context

Mary Immaculate Secondary School, Lisdoonvarna is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust). The current enrolment is 323 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and Post Leaving Certificate courses.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The student experience in Physical Education was characterised by very good classroom routines, exemplary student behaviour, and high-quality support for all students.
- Teaching and learning were very good, and high-quality, collaborative learner experiences were observed.
- The assessment practices observed were good, and reflective moments were designed effectively to give students the opportunity to self-regulate and set goals.
- Overall, subject provision and whole school support was good.
- The excellent arrangements that had been put in place for off-site activites to enhance the PE curricula delivery demonstrated the vision and commitment of senior management and the PE department.
- Subject planning and preparation for junior cycle PE was good; the PE department demonstrated reflective practice and sound professional judgement when choosing strands, in the context of very limiting facilties and student needs.

### Recommendations

- Units of learning did not include aligned assessment moments. All units of learning should be designed to include a creative, authentic assessment moment which aligns with the intended learning and with success criteria, to clarify and communicate what success looks like.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good, with high-quality, collaborative learner experiences observed.

- Warm-ups were predominantly teacher-led. It is advised that students be given the opportunity to lead warm-ups appropriate for their age and stage of development, to cultivate their ability to make choices about how they can best present to others and use a wide range of subject-specific vocabulary. Such a student-centred approach enables and empowers students to make decisions, implement ideas and take actions.

- Well-planned, effective questioning formed part of the assessment integrated in day-to-day lessons, as the teacher monitored students' progress in learning and identified how to support students to reflect on and critically analyse their own learning. The questions promoted interest, challenge and engagement in dialogue with and among the students.

- Students experienced a personalised learning experience and were challenged by the inclusion of choice and modification in tasks and games. In the challenging context of a very small general purpose room as the PE learning space, teachers' organisation of students, equipment, space and time created very good conditions for student-led learning.

- Students were proactive and self-directed when choosing differentiated tasks. They worked effectively in groups and demonstrated the ability to negotiate, discuss and reason. They were engaged in highly effective social development, skill enhancement and problem-solving tasks.

- The student experience of the curriculum is narrowed by the limitations of the facilities and equipment. Inclement weather also limits the continuity and development of student outcomes. However, the limited resources available are optimised through very good pedagogical decisions, creativity, responsiveness and flexibility by senior management and the PE department. Students' responses in focus groups described how they are enabled to acquire and apply their knowledge across a range of physical activity areas in limited facilities.

- The assessment practice observed was good. Reflective moments were designed effectively to give students the opportunity to self-regulate and set goals.

- An examination of a sample of report comments indicated the need for the physical education department to use the language of learning in ongoing reporting. Implementation of the guidance provided in the booklet *Ongoing Reporting for Effective Teaching and Learning,* available on the website of the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA), is recommended in this regard. It is advised that classroom-based descriptors, combined with a formative feedback comment, be used for reporting on junior cycle classroom-based assessments.

## 2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Overall, subject provision and whole school support was good. All teachers hold a qualification recognised by the Teaching Council and all students are timetabled for at least eighty minutes of PE per week.

- The exemplary links between the physical education curricular learning experiences and the extensive extra-curricular physical activity experiences provided by all staff were lauded by students in discussion with the inspector.

- On-site physical education facilities consist of a very small, general purpose space. Positively, a new, greenfield site school building has been granted and this will provide a full range of PE learning spaces.

- There is adequate storage space for current equipment. The storage room for physical education equipment is highly organised and the space is optimised excellently.

- The equipment available for teaching and learning of the *Gymnastics* was an area for improvement, with appropriate gymnastics equipment needed to implement this strand of the curriculum.

- Commendably, the school had secured access to a local leisure centre for swimming and water safety. This school-initiated arrangement demonstrated outstanding commitment on behalf of the PE department and the senior management to deliver the PE curriculum, in the most challenging circumstances.

- Digital technology supports such as mobile devices, or WiFi were not available for use in the PE learning space. Going forward, mobile devices with audio-visual capacity, a fixed projector, surround sound and a teacher device should be installed in the new PE hall and PE lab to further support teaching, learning and assessment in Physical Education.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- Subject planning and preparation for junior cycle Physical Education was good. The planning was dynamic, responsive to and reflective of the context, available facilities and needs of the students. The PE department demonstrated reflective practice and sound professional judgement when choosing strands, in the context of very limiting facilties.

- Planning was presented for all of the physical activity areas in the specification. Teachers are advised to ensure that the units of learning for *Gymnastics* and *Adventure Education* include assessement and reporting, as part of the junior cycle student learning experience, where possible.

- All junior cycle PE plans and related documents were maintained in a very well organised, shared, online planning platform.

- Minutes of departmental meetings indicated that the PE department and senior management are committed to continuing professional development and engage in very good dialogue.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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**

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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.**

The PE department has taken note of the recommendations from the report and will make every effort to implement them.

The following changes have been implemented to date.

- The use of language of learning in the reporting process has been developed and implemented as of May 2023.
- Student-led warm-ups have been incorporated into Physical Education classes.

## 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 | *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 *very good* 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; |