

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education
REPORT**

**Mountmellick Community School
Mountmellick, Co. Laois
Roll number: 91426A**

Date of inspection: 15 May 2014



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN PHYSICAL EDUCATION**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	15 May 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three double classes• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- A high quality of teaching and learning was observed in all lessons.
- The structure and pace of lessons and the resources and sequencing of learning tasks facilitated a high level of engagement, enjoyment and learning.
- Physical Education is a core subject for all students, with adequate time and timetable arrangements to support the organisation and delivery of a comprehensive programme.
- Very good efforts are made to promote a physically active culture, through a range of extra-curricular sports and physical activities.
- The quality of individual and subject department planning is very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The identification of an assessment task, linked to overarching learning outcomes, should be identified and incorporated into the programmes of work for each year group.
 - Management should endeavour to ensure that all physical education lessons are taught by teachers appropriately qualified in the subject discipline.
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INTRODUCTION

Mountmellick Community School is a co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 418 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- A high quality of learning and teaching was observed in all lessons.
- Lessons had a very good atmosphere, with a strong work ethic underpinned by positive and affirming interactions. Excellent efforts have been made to enhance the learning environment, through the display of a range of action photographs, relevant information, vocabulary and concepts related to physical activity, health, fitness and sport.
- Lessons were underpinned by excellent preparation, structure and pacing. Participation levels were very good, with all students actively engaged in their lessons, including those with additional physical or educational needs.
- Intended learning outcomes were clearly identified, displayed on the whiteboard, discussed and contextualised with students at the outset and during recapitulation. This very good formative practice provided students with a clear focus for their engagement and learning of relevant skills, principles and concepts.
- Of particular note in all lessons was the explicit use of relevant vocabulary and discussion to improve comprehension. This exemplary approach enhanced students' understanding of the concepts of physical fitness, health promotion and wellbeing or game-related tactics and strategies. Similarly, the explicit identification and practical application of key concepts, such as spatial awareness, force, velocity, time, distance, angles and trajectories, effectively integrated numerical reasoning into lessons.
- The practice of devolving responsibility to students to lead their own warm-up routines is exemplary. This contributed to students' shared ownership of the lesson and also supported the application and consolidation of their previous learning. Such approaches can also enhance students' confidence and leadership skills.
- Warm-up activities were progressively structured and sequenced, with a good focus on physiological readiness and preparation for performance. Most students demonstrated a good level of competency in a number of locomotion, dynamic range-of-motion and functional movement exercises.
- Lessons had a welcome emphasis on moderate-to-vigorous physical activity, whilst ensuring efficient movement mechanics. Students clearly benefit from this approach, which enhances their understanding, competencies and capacity to sustain engagement in physical activity.
- Skill-based tasks were excellently organised to optimise opportunities for skill acquisition, with clear instructions on how to improve competency. Students also had sufficient opportunities to apply the focused skills and principles-of-play in conditioned games, which enhanced the authenticity of their learning experiences.
- Teachers actively engaged with students to provide assistance or to differentiate tasks to suit their level of ability. Constructive feedback to guide learning was a common feature of lessons. The continued reinforcement of efficient biomechanics will further enhance students' kinaesthetic awareness.

- Demonstrations of the focused exercises, skills or principles-of-play were of a high technical standard. Clearly articulated performance criteria ensured students understood the elements involved in the performance of the assigned tasks.
- Questioning was effectively used to engage students cognitively in their learning and in analysing their movement competency. Good opportunities for social learning were provided through the effective construction of groups. The further development of peer-assisted learning, where appropriate, should be considered.
- Recording of participation is well developed, with students' progress in Physical Education reported to parents, as appropriate.
- The development of the assessment process is progressing well. Formative assessment is well embedded in lessons, with an admirable focus on self-assessment and the development of personal performance and fitness profiles. The use of a rich task approach is good practice and should be explored further to provide a focus for summative assessment. Consideration should be given to the identification of an assessment task, linked to overarching learning outcomes, for each year group.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Physical Education is a core subject on the curriculum for all students. The time provision and timetable arrangements are adequate to facilitate the organisation and delivery of a comprehensive physical education programme.
- Physical Education is mostly taught by one teacher who is a graduate of the subject. In addition, the school also relies on the deployment of an additional teacher, who has extensive coaching experience, to support the delivery of some of the programmes at senior cycle. The timetabling and team-teaching arrangements currently in operation work well and ensure lessons are under the guidance of the appropriately qualified teacher. However, it is best practice that all teachers delivering curricular Physical Education are appropriately qualified in the subject discipline.
- The school has access to very good facilities to support teaching and learning in Physical Education. Proposals by the physical education department to convert two unused rooms into a small fitness suite are admirable and should be supported, if resources permit.
- The subject department is well resourced with all the necessary equipment and materials to support teaching and learning. Consideration should be given to the purchase of additional resources, such as pedometers, heart-rate monitors and tablet computers. These will further support students in monitoring their physical activity behaviours, exercise intensity and motor learning.
- The substantial benefits of participation in sport and physical activity is recognised and valued by the school community. The physical education department along with a number of interested and dedicated teachers have been proactive in supporting the development of an extra-curricular sports and physical activity programme. The provision of these activities on both a competitive and recreational basis extends access to the

programme and appeals to a broader base of students. Consideration should be given to applying for the Active School Flag.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject department planning is very good.
- The subject plan documents all aspects of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school. The plan presents a broad and balanced programme of work for each year group.
- Detailed schemes of work have been developed to guide the delivery of each of the planned activity modules. These provide students with a range of learning experiences across the diversity of physical activity dimensions. Some good efforts have been made to accommodate students' physical activity interests into the programme, particularly in senior cycle. The inclusion of the student voice is very good practice and the expansion of this approach should be considered, where possible.
- To build on the good work to date, consideration should be given to identifying a number of overarching learning outcomes for each year group, along with an assessment task to capture learning across the activity strands.
- Good attention is paid to health and safety issues in the subject plan.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.