

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Physical Education  
REPORT**

**Dominican College Sion Hill  
Cross Avenue, Blackrock, County Dublin  
Roll number: 60070K**

**Date of inspection: 22 September 2011**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

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| <b>Date of inspection</b>   | 22 September 2011   |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussions with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Meeting with Students Sports Committee</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul> |

**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.
- While Physical Education is well supported in the school and is a core subject for all students, the provision of single period lessons for most class groups restricts the range and depth of possible learning experiences.
- An exemplary approach is taken to promoting a physically active culture amongst students, through the structures and supports for an extensive extra-curricular sport and physical activity programme.
- The quality of planning and preparation for the organisation and delivery of a broad, balanced and coherent physical education programme is excellent.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Management should ensure that the time allocation, timetable arrangements and deployment of teachers to Physical Education are in accordance with the recommendations of the Department of Education and Skills.
  - A risk assessment should be conducted to inform the physical education health and safety policy.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Dominican College Sion Hill is a voluntary secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 361 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the evaluation; the board chose to accept the report without response.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- There was a high quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed. A systematic approach was taken to the organisation and delivery of lessons, which optimised the time available for practical engagement and learning. Where timetabled, single period lessons restricted the possible use of a broader range of approaches to support students' learning and the depth of their learning experiences.
- All of the lessons were characterised by excellent preparation, structure and pacing. There was full and active participation of all students in the lessons observed. Very good efforts were made in all lessons to ensure the effective inclusion and participation of newcomer students and those with special educational needs.
- The good practice of sharing the intended learning outcomes with students at the start of lessons was further enhanced by the very effective use of information and communications technology (ICT). The integration of ICT into the delivery of lessons enhanced students' application to the set tasks.
- Warm-up activities were progressively structured and sequenced. The very good practice of giving students opportunities to lead their peers in elements of the warm-up contributed considerably to students' enjoyment of the lesson, and also helped to consolidate their previous learning and enhance their confidence and leadership skills.
- Demonstrations by teachers of the focused exercises and skills were of a high technical standard, and together with clearly articulated teaching points and criteria for performance, ensured that students understood all elements involved in the performance of the assigned tasks. A high level of appropriate movement and activity specific terminology was also a common feature of the lessons observed. Students' use and application of these terms and phrases during their lessons was also good.
- Questioning was effectively used to engage students cognitively in their learning and in analysing their movement competency and that of their peers. The further development of peer-assisted learning, where appropriate, should be considered.
- Classroom management was of a high standard and a positive and supportive rapport has been established between students and their teachers.
- Good records are maintained of students' attendance and participation in their physical education lessons. The development of a comprehensive assessment process is progressing well. The display of target levels of attainment and related criteria provides clear guidance for students of the standards required for their learning in each of the modules in their programme of work. The combined approach of determining levels of attainment, end of module self assessment, personal profiling and monitoring of participation and engagement provides a sound basis for assessment of students' learning and reporting to parents.

## **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Physical Education forms a core element of the curriculum for all year groups. The timetable arrangements for the subject should be reconsidered in favour of at least one double period per week for each class group. Curricular restrictions notwithstanding, management is encouraged to work towards providing the subject in line with the recommendations of the Department.
- The concurrent timetabling and team teaching arrangements currently in operation worked well and ensured that all lessons were under the guidance of the appropriately qualified physical education teacher. However, it is best practice that only teachers with the appropriate recognised qualifications be deployed to teach the subject.
- The facilities are adequate to provide for the delivery of the planned physical education programmes. These facilities were very well maintained and presented.
- The physical education department, management and teachers have been exceptionally proactive in supporting the development of a broad ranging and well constructed extra-curricular programme. The impact and success of this programme was highly praised by both students and teachers interviewed over the course of the inspection.
- The establishment of a students' sports committee, and its role in the further development of the extra-curricular sport, physical activity and health promoting initiatives, is exemplary.
- A number of dedicated notice boards are effectively used to promote upcoming events, provide information and display reports and photographs of students' engagement in their physical education and extra-curricular programmes.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of planning for Physical Education is excellent. A comprehensive subject plan identifies all elements of the organisation and delivery of the subject in the school.
- The detail in the subject plan ensures that students' learning is incrementally sequenced. The programmes of work provide a diverse range of learning experiences for students, with a core emphasis on personal development, competency and confidence. Detailed schemes of work are presented in a very accessible format, underpinned by clearly identified learning outcomes.
- A very good range of resources and equipment is available to support teaching and learning. The addition of a sound system and mobile multi-media suite further supports teaching and learning. The recent capital grant for Physical Education has been received and a strategic approach is being taken to investing in additional equipment and resources that will further enhance students' engagement in the programmes of work.
- Ongoing review and revision of the quality and engagement of the physical education programmes, the extra-curricular competitive sports programme, and the recreational physical activity programmes ensure that these programmes continue to evolve to meet the needs and interests of students.
- Further development of the health and safety policy related to Physical Education should be undertaken with specific emphasis on a risk assessment of the use of the various facilities and equipment.

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.

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