



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Physical Education Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Mary's Knockbeg College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Knockbeg Co. Carlow
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	61130H
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	14/10/2024 and 16/10/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	08/01/2025

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.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

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> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.

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

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	14/10/2024 and 16/10/2024
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Mary's Knockbeg College is a post-primary school for boys located on the border between County Carlow and County Laois. There were 495 students enrolled in the school at the time of the inspection. The school offered the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) to its students. The school also offered two classes for students with autism.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed during the six lessons was good, the quality ranged from good to very good.
- Teachers modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment for the subject and demonstrated very good subject knowledge.
- Whole school support and subject provision for Physical Education (PE) were, on the whole, very good.
- The school had very effectively introduced Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) as a subject option for the Leaving Certificate in 2020.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation observed during the evaluation was good.
- An excellent range of extra-curricular physical activities, many of which complemented learning in PE classes, was available to students in the school.

Recommendations

- Senior management should as a matter of priority, review timetabled provision for PE and should ensure that appropriate time is allocated for all senior cycle students.
- In each lesson observed, an average of fifteen minutes of class time was lost due to the requirement for students to change into and out of their sports gear at the beginning and end of lessons. In order to ensure that the required time for PE is provided for and to support high quality outcomes and experiences, a review of current changing arrangements should be undertaken.
- To enhance the quality of teaching, learning and assessment, school management and teachers should review how the school's current digital resources can be deployed more effectively to further enhance student engagement and motivation.
- In line with general good practice principles, senior management and the physical education teachers should ensure that parents and/or guardians complete a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) annually to inform all planning and preparation.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed during the six lessons was good, the quality ranged from good to very good.
- In all lessons, teachers modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment for the subject and demonstrated very good subject knowledge. This created a very positive, respectful, learning environment for all students.
- Learning intentions were shared with students at the beginning of all lessons and revisited at various intervals during lessons. This facilitated students to assess their learning and recognise their incremental progress in the subject.
- The LCPE teachers effectively utilised the school's online learning platform for sharing lesson resources and reviewing students' work. A sample of students' work showed that teachers reviewed students' LCPE written homework and project work online, offering constructive feedback and clear directions for improvement. Students mentioned that this online platform significantly supported their own learning and study.
- In one fifth year Senior Cycle Physical Education (SCPE) lesson, very effective practice was observed where students were divided into teams and were provided with erasable basketball coaching clipboards. Students were required to devise offensive and defensive strategies to be used during conditioned games while timed against a twenty four second shot clock. This highly effective practice supported students to take greater ownership and responsibility for their own learning while using the key skills of senior cycle.
- Commendably, the PE department had successfully mapped the school campus for use in both digital and map-based orienteering lessons. The use of these well planned, school-specific resources during a first-year PE lesson facilitated a very good level of student engagement.
- In each lesson observed, an average of fifteen minutes of class time was lost due to the requirement for students to change into and out of their sports gear at the beginning and end of lessons. In order to ensure that the required time for PE is provided for and to support high quality outcomes and experiences, a review of current changing arrangements should be undertaken.
- The potential benefits of a short throw projector to support teaching and learning in the PE hall were not evident. Together with management, teachers should review how the school's current digital resources can be deployed more effectively to further enhance student engagement and motivation. The use of additional infographics and other visual stimuli are also encouraged.
- Feedback gathered from the student focus group indicated that students held very positive attitudes towards their learning in PE lessons. Some students present noted that they would like to receive more regular instruction in the PE Lab as part of their SCPE experiences. Senior students also reported that they had received instruction on swimming strokes and water safety in Transition Year (TY) but that this practice had been recently discontinued. Senior management and the PE department were encouraged to review this arrangement.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of whole school support and subject provision for PE was very good.
- An affirming, inclusive, welcoming environment had been created through indoor displays of student participation in extra-curricular activities and sporting events.
- All lessons were taught by qualified personnel, with appropriate qualifications as recognised by the Teaching Council.
- The school had very effectively introduced LCPE as a subject option for the Leaving Certificate in 2020.

- School management gave very good support to the department in facilitating teachers as examiners for certificate examinations as well as facilitating opportunities to engage extensively with teacher professional learning for LCPE and the new Junior Cycle PE Specification. There would be merit in all members of the PE department engaging with similar teacher professional learning events for SCPE with Óide in order to build further capacity across the department.
- Senior management were very supportive of teachers' memberships of professional networks, and it was positive to note that the subject department maintained strong links with the subject association, the PEAI (Physical Education Association of Ireland).
- Junior Cycle students had access to the minimum of 135 hours of PE lessons over the three years of junior cycle as outlined in Circular 0028/2023. In TY, students had eighty minutes of timetabled SCPE per week. In fifth and sixth-year, SCPE was an optional subject timetabled against LCVP. Senior management should as a matter of priority, review timetabled provision for PE and should ensure that appropriate time is allocated for all senior cycle students.
- Commendably, senior management had included LCPE as part of a taster module for all TY students. This was facilitated by way of eleven-week block rotations. Teachers should ensure that students have adequate opportunities to think, create and trial new ideas and explore content in an engaging manner in the classroom, PE hall and computer room during the module.
- There were a variety of specialist PE spaces available at the time of inspection. Indoor facilities included a large, modern PE hall with adjoining changing rooms, an equipment storage room and a PE Lab. Outdoor facilities included a variety of grass pitches, running trails and five outdoor tarmac courts. The removal of moss and algae from the surface of the outdoor basketball courts was required to allow them to be safely utilised for the teaching of the subject. The school should use the templates from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), available online, to risk assess PE facilities and should address any identified areas for improvement.
- Feedback gathered from the focus group highlighted that students would like to have access to the school's outdoor basketball courts for exercise and informal games during their lunchbreak.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of lesson planning and preparation was good overall.
- Teachers attended workshops and courses in their own time in order to enhance their individual professional development.
- An annual analysis was undertaken of students' LCPE results in the state examinations. To complement this effective practice, it was recommended that the physical education department include a developmental section in the subject plan that targets areas for improvement in student's project and written work.
- At the time of the inspection, planning and preparation for the JCPE Specification (2023) and SCPE Framework required improvement. The PE department have identified a requirement for further teacher professional learning on the SCPE Framework. Senior management and teachers should prioritise this professional development to improve outcomes for all students.
- There were no clear procedures in place to capture learning in SCPE. In this context, the school should review planning and preparation for SCPE and should include an exploration of how students can track, monitor and critically reflect on their learning.
- Regular formal meetings of the PE department are held and minutes of meetings are shared with senior management. The main focus of department meetings was on logistical and organisational issues. To improve student outcomes and experiences, the physical education department was encouraged to prioritise teaching, learning and assessment of PE in all meetings.
- In line with general good practice principles, senior management and the physical education teachers should ensure that parents and/or guardians complete a Physical

Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) annually to inform all planning and preparation.

- Teachers were commended for providing a wide variety of extra-curricular learning opportunities to students to extend their learning beyond the classroom and PE hall.

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.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of St Mary's
Knockbeg College about their
learning in Physical Education
Dates of inspection:
14/10/2024 and 16/10/2024

What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in **Physical Education**.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



- There were very respectful and positive relationships between all students and PE teachers.
- The introduction of LCPE as an optional subject for the Leaving Certificate has been a very positive development.
- PE teachers provided meaningful and supportive feedback to students in all lessons, particularly for those studying LCPE.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in **Physical Education**?



- All students should experience a double period of timetabled Senior Cycle PE (SCPE) each week in 5th and 6th year.
- The school should install appropriate digital technology in the PE hall to help their students learn more effectively.
- To maximise students' PE time, a review of current changing arrangements should be undertaken.
- The school should review the use of the four outdoor basketball courts at lunchtime.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.

Special thanks to the students who participated in the focus group.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	Provision that is very good is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The enthusiasm of the PE Staff.
- The effective introduction of the Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE).

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

In response to the recommendations:

- We have already improved the deployment of digital resources in both the PE Hall and PE Lab.
- We are committed to reviewing options around PE Uniform and timetabling provision with all stakeholders, before the start of the 2025/26 school year.
- We intend to use a PAR-Q at the start of the next school year to assist planning and preparation.

We look forward to future engagement with the Inspectorate.