

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Physical Education**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Abbey Vocational School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	The Glebe Donegal Town County Donegal
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	71180F

**Date of Inspection: 09-11-2017**



### **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.

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.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	09-11-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Abbey Vocational School is a co-educational school under the patronage of the Donegal Education and Training Board. The school has an enrolment of 424 boys and 440 girls in the current school year. In addition to the Junior Certificate and established Leaving Certificate programmes, the school offers an optional Transition Year programme (TY), Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was of a very high quality; student leadership skills were very well developed in the TY programme.
- The care and commitment of all teachers to inclusive practice in their lessons are highly commended.
- The student experience was significantly enhanced by the very effective differentiated teaching methodologies used in all lessons.
- Subject provision is very good; however, a small minority of sixth-year students, who also study higher-level Mathematics, only have access to a single Physical Education (PE) lesson.
- The facilities available for the teaching and learning of PE are excellent; well-established links with local sporting groups have aided the development of these facilities.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation is very good; collaboration among PE department members is a significant strength.

#### Recommendations

- To build on the leadership skills provided to TY students, the PE department should plan to provide incrementally appropriate opportunities for all students to develop their leadership skills in lessons.
- The PE department should consider how to effectively share the results of the formal physical assessments, planned for junior-cycle students, with parents.
- School management should ensure that all students receive a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week for the full school year.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment in observed lessons was very good, with many examples of exemplary practice observed.
- Well-established classroom routines, which maximised teaching time, were a significant benefit to the students' experience.
- TY students were provided with an opportunity to take on a leadership role in class. This very effective practice of developing the leadership skills of students should be planned for and incorporated into the experience of students in all year groups.
- The care and commitment of all teachers to inclusive practice in their lessons are highly commended. In particular, the safe, affirming and caring nature of the provision of aquatics to students accessing the Level 2 Learning Programme is a significant support to the students involved.
- Differentiation was integrated seamlessly into all lessons with a particular emphasis on structuring learning experiences as challenges. Students benefitted greatly from this approach as it allowed students of all levels to access the curriculum successfully.
- Very good self and peer-assessment practices were observed in almost all lessons and the use of a student workbook to record fitness test results and student reflections is very good practice. In addition, the PE department is planning to introduce formal physical assessments this year. Consideration should be given to the manner in which the results of these assessments will be shared effectively with parents.
- In lessons where it was observed, information and communication technology (ICT) was used appropriately to illustrate specific teaching points. The PE department reported that it has begun to plan for further development of ICT as a learning and assessment tool in PE lessons; this would be a worthwhile initiative.
- The addition of a Wellbeing class in first year with strong links to the PE department is commended. Students will experience three ten-week blocks which include a focus on the Health Promoting Schools programme and the Active Flag Initiative.

### 2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support is very good.
- Very commendable, well thought-out efforts have been made by senior management in an attempt to provide optimal PE provision for all students. This includes refurbishment of the sports hall to provide three dedicated teaching spaces and the development of additional changing-room facilities. The provision of additional aquatics for the Level 2 Programme students is noteworthy.
- TY students have excellent provision with a triple period provided for physical activities in addition to a double period provided for PE. Double periods of PE are provided for students in all other year groups; however, a small number of higher-level Mathematics students only have access currently to a single period of PE. School management should review this provision and provide all students with a minimum of a double period of PE each week for the full school year.

- The concurrent timetabling of class groups is inevitable in a school of this size. It is good practice that where teaching spaces must be shared this is done with classes of the same year group. School management reported that due to an anomaly this year, on occasion, different year groups are doubled up. Every effort should be made to reduce the doubling up of different year groups in the future.
- The facilities available for the teaching and learning of PE are excellent. A full-sized sports hall, fitness suite, hard-court playing area, all-weather pitch, six-lane tartan sprint track, outdoor athletics area and a Gaelic pitch enhance student experience greatly. Cooperation with local sports groups has played a key part in adding to these extensive facilities and the school have further plans in place to continue the development of their facilities.
- Whole-school support for extra-curricular activities is very noteworthy. As a Health Promoting School physical wellbeing was selected as an area for focus; yoga for staff, a *couch to 5km* and a skipathon were organised to support this initiative. Competitive and non-competitive opportunities for students to participate in sports such as athletics, basketball, camogie, Gaelic Football and soccer are also provided and the voluntary involvement of staff and the support of management for these initiatives are praiseworthy.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is very good. Individual lessons were very well planned with age-appropriate, progressive learning activities selected.
- Very detailed schemes of work are in place for all curricular areas. Currently, five blocks of work are planned for each year. The PE department should keep this under review to ensure all blocks receive adequate time allocation throughout the year.
- The use of common schemes of work, team teaching and an online platform for sharing relevant resources is indicative of the high levels of collaboration between all members of the PE department.
- The PE department works in a highly committed manner and has a high level of engagement with continuous professional development. In particular, the sharing of good practice is encouraged at department meetings; individual teachers take on responsibility for sharing their expertise in specific areas, for example the integration of ICT as a learning and assessment tool, instructional leadership and special educational needs.
- The voluntary position of subject coordinator is rotated annually among the members of the PE department. This good practice facilitates all department members to take on leadership roles within the school.

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

The Board of the Abbey Vocational School are delighted with the excellent report on Physical Education. The Board acknowledges the high standards implemented in planning, teaching, learning and assessment practices as well as the excellent care, differentiation and inclusive practices recognised in the report. We welcome the fact that the area of collaboration, which is the SSE focus of our school, was recognised as a significant strength.

### **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

1. The PE Department will build on the leadership skills provided to the TY PE students and extend this to all classes.
2. The PE Department is now considering how to effectively share the results of the formal physical assessments, planned for Junior-Cycle students, with parents.
3. The school management will continue to ensure that all students receive a minimum of a double period of timetabled PE each week for the full school year. This will now include the small minority of sixth-year students who also study higher level Maths who have only access to a single PE lesson.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;