



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Physical Education

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Meán Scoil Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile/School address	5 St. Joseph's Road Longford Town Co. Longford
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	63760E
Dátaí na cigireachta/ Dates of evaluation	24/03/2025 and 25/03/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	26/05/2025

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

Date of inspection	24/03/2025 and 25/03/2025
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 5 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Meán Scoil Mhuire is a post-primary school for girls under the trusteeship of the Catholic Education an Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST) located in Longford Town, County Longford. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion. There were 608 students enrolled in the school at the time of the inspection. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). The school has one class for students with autism.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good.
- All teachers encouraged and regularly affirmed student participation, fostering a respectful and supportive learning environment.
- Whole school support and subject provision for Physical Education (PE) were good; aspects of provision for students opting to study LCVP required improvement.
- Students were permitted to wear their PE uniform to school on their timetabled day for PE. This practical policy alleviated time pressure and changing requirements which both the PE department and students highlighted as a significant advantage in efficiently using their lesson time.
- The quality of planning and preparation varied from good to requiring improvement.

Recommendations

- Currently students who opt to study LCVP do not receive their required weekly allocation of tuition time in PE as set out in the Senior Cycle Physical Education (SCPE) Framework. This shortfall should be addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- Planning and preparation for the SCPE Framework required improvement to achieve a good standard. The PE department should oversee a review of planning for SCPE and should ensure that all provision, including the adventure education, aquatics and health-related activity (HRA) units of learning in TY, is aligned with the requirements of the Framework.
- Management was aware of the need to avoid the timetabling of two class groups, particularly those from different year groups, simultaneously. It was noted that this happened during a number of lessons and was a barrier to both teachers and students accessing the limited school facilities and curriculums effectively.
- To enable students to identify gaps in their learning and create a clear pathway for improvement, the PE department should establish a student profiling strategy to assess, track and document students' progress.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment, across the five lessons observed, was good. The quality of individual lessons ranged from very good to requiring improvement.
- All teachers encouraged and regularly affirmed student participation, fostering a respectful and supportive learning environment.
- Good circulation by teachers during lessons improved student participation levels and allowed teachers to provide effective one-to-one support to individual students when required.
- In one first-year junior cycle PE (JCPE) lesson, very effective practice was observed when teacher demonstrations supported students to successfully mirror gymnastics rolls, transitions and sequences. Students were then divided into pairs and were required to practice these transitions and provide peer feedback to their partner. To further enhance student outcomes, the use of task cards with supporting images and terminology would enable students to understand the features of quality and provide more effective directed feedback.
- Effective practice related to questioning was evident when teachers used higher-order questioning that drew on students' prior learning and extended their thinking. Students responded enthusiastically when questioning was linked to local, national and international sporting contexts. This effective practice should be extended to all lessons.
- In a minority of lessons, the timing and sequencing of newly introduced, complex skills and techniques required improvement. To support students' progression teachers should ensure that a level of proficiency is achieved in the fundamental skills of the unit before moving onto more complex tasks and techniques. This logical sequencing of skills should build on students' incremental progress and should be reflected in the planning of all units of learning.
- To enable students to identify gaps in their learning and create a clear pathway for improvement, the PE department should establish a student profiling strategy to assess, track and document students' progress.
- Students who engaged in a focus group meeting spoke positively of their overall experiences in PE. Feedback indicated that students experienced a broad and balanced PE programme, particularly in junior cycle and TY. All students indicated that they would value further time and variety in their dance units of learning.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Whole school support and subject provision for PE were, on the whole, good.
- Qualified personnel, with appropriate qualifications as recognised by the Teaching Council, taught all lessons.
- All junior cycle students had 135 hours of timetabled JCPE lessons over the three years of junior cycle as outlined in Circular 0028/2023.
- Currently students who opt to study LCVP do not receive their required weekly allocation of tuition time in PE as set out in the SCPE Framework and Circular 0054/2023. This shortfall should be addressed at the earliest opportunity.
- In Transition Year (TY) all students had two hours of SCPE per week for twenty-two weeks of the year. For the remaining twelve weeks students moved to a photography module. Provision for Active Leisure lessons was timetabled in TY for two hours per week. As part of this module, students experienced a mixture of swimming lessons, adventure education, group trips and team building events to Coral Leisure Centre, Slieve Bawn and Derrycassin Woods. Senior management and the PE department were encouraged to incorporate the provision, planning and assessment of these Active Leisure lessons into the overall SCPE programme.

- In fifth and sixth-year, students had sixty minutes of timetabled SCPE per week, which fell short of requirements. Senior management should review timetabled provision for SCPE and ensure that appropriate time is allocated for all fifth and sixth-year students.
- Parental and student voice was central in the design of a new PE uniform which has been very positively received by all of the school community. Students were permitted to wear their PE uniform to school on their timetabled day for PE. Both the PE department and students highlighted this as a significant advantage in efficiently using lesson time.
- There were limited specialist PE spaces available at the time of inspection. Indoor facilities included a very small indoor hall and an equipment storage room for PE. Outdoor facilities included three tarmac basketball courts where new line markings were required. While the students' experience of the PE curricula was limited by the size of the on-site facilities, local, off-site arrangements had been put in place by the PE department to enhance student experiences and to ensure the learning outcomes of the PE curriculums were achieved.
- In line with effective practice, the school should use the templates from the Health and Safety Authority (HSA), available online, to regularly risk assess all PE facilities and equipment, and should address any identified areas for improvement.
- Management was aware of the need to avoid the timetabling of two class groups, particularly those from different year groups, simultaneously. It was noted that this happened during a small number of lessons and was a barrier to both teachers and students accessing the limited school facilities and curriculums effectively.
- At the time of the inspection, Leaving Certificate Physical Education (LCPE) was not offered as an optional subject for the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE). Plans were in place to offer the subject for the first time from September 2025. This was welcomed by students in the focus group meeting. One member of the PE department has already attended teacher professional learning for LCPE.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation varied from good in some aspects to requiring improvement to achieve a good standard in others.
- Formal subject department meetings were held regularly and minutes were recorded. It was recommended that teachers allocate time in all departmental meetings to review and share practice related to teaching, learning and assessment.
- The subject co-ordinator role was rotated annually between the three PE teachers.
- Planning for JCPE (2023) was in progress with Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) being conducted for the first time this year. The PE department should ensure that learning outcomes as opposed to activity areas are the focus of all units of learning. Teachers should now begin to use learning from Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings to support all future planning.
- Planning and preparation for the SCPE Framework required further development. The PE department should develop an appropriate senior cycle PE programme, which incorporates the adventure education, aquatics and HRA units of learning in TY, ensuring that all provision is aligned with the requirements of the SCPE Framework.
- Student reports for PE were too generic and lacked specific feedback on individual progress. Teachers should provide more focused formative feedback on skills, concepts, and strategies for sustained participation. This will give students and parents/guardians clear insights into their performance and achievements in the subject.
- The PE department have identified a requirement for further TPL on the SCPE Framework. The PE department were encouraged to establish professional links with Oide and the Physical Education Association of Ireland (PEAI) to support them with this work.
- In line with general good practice principles, senior management and PE teachers should ensure that parents and/or guardians complete a Physical Activity Readiness Questionnaire (PAR-Q) annually to inform all planning and preparation.

- Photographs of students' participation in extra-curricular activities were displayed throughout the school, which contributed very positively to the school community's sense of identity.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, two deputy principals and three subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of Meán Scoil Mhuire about their learning in Physical Education

Date of inspection:

24/03/2025 and 25/03/2025

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?



- All PE lessons took place in a positive, respectful learning atmosphere.
- It was very positive that students are allowed to wear their PE uniform to school on their timetabled day for PE.
- The introduction of LCPE as an optional subject for the Leaving Certificate from September 2025 was welcomed by all students.

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



- Students who opt to study LCVP should be timetabled for SCPE lessons each week.
- Individual student profiles in PE would support all students to assess, monitor and reflect on their learning more effectively.
- All senior cycle students have eighty minutes (or equivalent) of timetabled SCPE classes per week.
- The school should avoid having two classes timetabled for PE at once.

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 Board of Management of Meán Scoil Mhuire welcomes this inspection report on the quality of teaching and learning in our Physical Education Department. The Board of Management notes the recognition of very effective and effective practice, as well as the strengths identified in teaching, learning and assessment. The inspection report also recognises that subject and whole - school support for Physical Education is good, with the effective use of resources to support student learning and engagement beyond the classroom.

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

Our school is committed to implementing the recommendations of this report which will inform teaching and learning in the Physical Education Department and in all other departments in our school in the years ahead.