An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: Physical Education (PE) REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St. Joseph's National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Borris-In-Ossory Co. Laois
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	07442U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	13/05/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	07/09/2026

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations currently report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects and curriculum areas of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), and the redeveloped Primary Curriculum (2025). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject or curriculum area in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspectors evaluated learning and teaching in PE under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learning experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

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 curriculum evaluation 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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a pupil-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.
2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a pupil friendly version that is displayed where pupils and the school community can see it.
2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and pupils.
3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	12/05/2026 & 13/05/2026
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus-group interview	• Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

St. Joseph's NS is a co-educational, Catholic primary school in Borris-in-Ossory, Co. Laois. It is under the patronage of the bishop of Ossory. The school had an administrative principal, four mainstream teaching posts and three full-time special education teaching posts. The school also had three special classes for pupils with autism. There were 98 pupils enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Pupils' learning outcomes in Physical Education (PE) were good. Pupils displayed high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning in PE.
- Learner experiences were good.
- Teachers' practice was effective. Teachers demonstrated commendable pedagogical approaches in teaching PE including clear communication, good use of explicit instruction and modelling of movement.
- Whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), was very good.

Recommendations

- As the systematic progression of pupils' learning in PE warranted further development, teachers should ensure a focus of learning is identified for each lesson that builds on pupils' prior knowledge and progresses learning in line with curriculum expectations.
- As there was a need to further clarify the purpose of assessment during lessons, teachers should share success criteria linked to the focus of learning with pupils. Where appropriate, they should also identify opportunities to co-create these criteria with pupils.
- Leaders and teachers should agree whole-school expectations of learning across the six strands of the PE curriculum to guide progression and to enhance the effectiveness of learning programmes delivered by external coaches.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

Pupils' learning outcomes in Physical Education (PE) were good. Pupils had a good knowledge of movement skills and strategies relating to the *Athletics* strand. They understood race start stances, effective running techniques and could apply strategies of using running approaches for distance while jumping and throwing. Pupils ably described their learning in *Gymnastics* including their body awareness in support of balancing. They identified safety points in rolling movements. Pupils learning in relation to *Dance* and *Outdoor and adventure activities* strands was less developed. There was scope to develop their knowledge of creativity in movements in *Dance* and *Gymnastics* through purposeful learning experiences. Skills development in relation to ball handling, kicking and carrying and striking were progressed appropriately for most pupils in relation to the *Games* strand. Pupils had a well-developed sense of water safety and capably described various swim strokes including movement strategies to stay afloat in water.

Pupils displayed high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning in PE. They demonstrated persistence in tasks and effective teamwork. During the focus group discussion, they spoke positively about the social and health aspects offered in PE including opportunities to make friendships and to develop healthy exercise choices for life. Pupils recognised the value of PE as a subject. Overall, there was scope to more systematically progress pupils' learning in PE in a more balanced manner across the strands. Teachers should ensure a focus of learning is identified for each lesson that builds on pupils' prior knowledge and progresses learning according to curriculum expectations.

2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learning experiences and teachers' practice

Learner experiences were good. Pupils' learning was supported by positive relationships between pupils, their peers and teachers as well as high expectations for participation for all in learning tasks. Pupils accessed a range of PE equipment and learning spaces for PE were well maintained. In lessons where pupils had opportunities to purposefully collaborate on learning tasks, positive relationships were supported and pupils' consolidation of movement skills was enhanced. Learning experiences contributed to the development of inclusive learning in the school. Pupils from mainstream and special classes routinely enjoyed purposeful learning experiences in PE. Pupils did not use digital technologies during PE experiences. It would be beneficial for teachers to reflect on how learning might be enhanced through the use of digital technologies, for example, to support exemplification and to record learning and pupil reflections.

Pupils had begun to use self and peer assessment approaches to evaluate their learning in PE. The assessment rubrics used were overly broad and this limited the effectiveness of pupil reflections as a result. Teachers should share success criteria linked to the focus of learning with pupils. Where appropriate, they should also identify opportunities to co-create these criteria with pupils. This could include a focus on the development of a movement skill or a focus on the performance of sequences with a partner. This will support teachers' more purposeful monitoring of learning and the provision of feedback. Opportunities for pupils to self and peer assess would also be enhanced. Pupils had a wide range of worthwhile co-curricular opportunities that promoted movement and enabled them to represent their school in sporting events.

Teachers' practice was effective. Teachers demonstrated commendable pedagogical approaches in teaching PE including clear communication, good use of explicit instruction and modelling of movement. They prepared well-paced and structured lessons. Highly commendable cooperation between mainstream and special class teachers was evident that contributed to purposeful learning for all pupils. There was scope for teachers to prepare experiences more broadly across the various strands of the PE curriculum, in particular in relation to the strands of *Dance* and *Outdoor and adventure activities*.

The school employed external coaches to deliver significant components of the PE curriculum, most notably a variety of sports linked to the *Games* strand as well as experiences related to the *Gymnastics* strand. These experiences helped to build beneficial links with local sports clubs, providing pupils with valuable opportunities to engage in physical activity beyond school. During the focus group, pupils spoke positively about these experiences and how participation had increased their interest in physical activity. Pupils also reported that these opportunities had encouraged them to become involved in local sports clubs. There was a need to strengthen the organisation of these experiences with external coaches to ensure improved alignment to curriculum learning outcomes. This should include progression in learning that is carefully monitored and consolidated by teachers. Leaders and teachers should agree whole-school expectations of learning across the six strands of the PE curriculum to guide progression and to enhance the effectiveness of learning programmes delivered by external coaches.

3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

Whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), was very good. The PE plan provided a useful overview of organisational considerations for learning. Leaders and teachers should continue to develop the plan in support of a more broad and balanced delivery of the strands of the PE curriculum.

The positive school culture, based on the shared vision of the senior leadership team, was highly commendable and supported all members of the school community to contribute to the development of the school. School improvement planning was very effective and was tailored to the specific needs of the school presently. SSE processes were used to very good effect in support of whole-school wellbeing development with an evidence base including feedback from teachers, parents and pupils. Leaders are well placed to employ these processes to developing curriculum provision further. The impact of current improvement planning was clearly evident on areas including a focus on wellbeing and contributed to the development of an inclusive school culture.

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

For the pupils of St. Joseph's National School about their learning in PE
Date of inspection: 13/05/2026

Introduction

Your school had an inspection of PE recently. This page for pupils describes what the inspectors found and gives ideas about what the school should do to make learning better.

What did the inspectors do during the visit?

The inspectors visited classrooms and talked to teachers and pupils about the work they were doing. The inspectors also met with a focus group of pupils to talk to them about their learning.

What did the inspectors find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils' learning in PE was good. Pupils enjoyed their lessons in PE and said PE was an important subject.
- Pupils had opportunities to play lots of different games as part of their learning in PE.
- Pupils had begun to self-assess in PE lessons and were able to describe many of the skills they had learned in lessons.

What the inspectors said the school should do to make learning better

- Pupils should learn something new in each PE lesson.
- Pupils should have opportunities to agree learning goals with their teachers, so they know what to practise, how to improve and how to help each other learn.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to pupils who took part 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

Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges the findings of the Inspectorate and is pleased that the report recognises the good and very good ongoing work taking place in the school in relation to PE.

The Board believes that the findings of the Inspection report across all three headings are an accurate reflection of the work taking place in the school in PE.

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

The staff and Board of Management have discussed the Inspectorates recommendations. The three recommendations will be addressed in the following ways:

- Wellbeing will be the first specification enacted under the new Curriculum Framework, beginning in September 2026.
- As part of this enactment, a new whole-school plan will be developed with a particular focus on progression through the curriculum and the effective use of outside coaches to deliver parts of the PE Curriculum.
- Teachers will identify a focus of learning for each PE lesson, and this will be shared with the pupils, along with the success criteria for the particular learning focus.
- Where suitable, pupils will be included in the development of success criteria with a learning focus.