

Education and Training
Inspectorate

Summary Evaluation of the Curriculum Sports Programme

November 2010



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In this report, proportions may be described as percentages, common fractions and in more general quantitative terms. Where more general terms are used, they should be interpreted as follows:

Almost/nearly all	-	more than 90%
Most	-	75%-90%
A majority	-	50%-74%
A significant minority	-	30%-49%
A minority	-	10%-29%
Very few/a small number	-	less than 10%

In assessing the various features of the provision, Inspectors relate their evaluations to six descriptors as set out below:

DESCRIPTOR
Outstanding
Very Good
Good
Satisfactory
Inadequate
Unsatisfactory

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 In September 2007, the Minister of Education announced the establishment of a Curriculum Sports Programme (CSP) which was to commence during the 2007/08 school year. The main objectives of the programme are:

- to develop the generic physical literacy skills of our youngest children through participation in enjoyable sports activities;
- to help raise children's confidence and self-esteem, their motivation to learn and their achievements in other curricular areas, particularly literacy and numeracy; and
- to raise the confidence and skills of primary teachers in delivering physical education.

1.2 The governing bodies of the Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) and the Irish Football Association (IFA) were invited to work with the Department of Education (DE) and its education partners to deliver the programme through the use of a network of qualified coaches. The coaches would provide coaching sessions during curriculum time to children in primary schools, with a particular focus on foundation stage (FS) and key stage (KS) 1. Priority was to be given to those schools where children were likely to benefit most from this new opportunity to take part in curriculum-linked physical activity, in particular, schools in disadvantaged areas.

1.3 The GAA began the programme in November 2007 working in almost 200 schools across the five Education and Library Boards (ELBs). The IFA began their work in schools in February 2008 working in 170 schools across the five ELBs. In preparation for the implementation of the programme, both Associations put in place a four week training schedule for the coaches they had employed. In the academic year 2008/09 with additional funding from DE, the GAA and the IFA increased the number of coaches from 20 in the first year of the programme to 32 and 30 respectively. In the 2009/10 school year 62 coaches delivered the programme to 600 primary schools across all the ELBs.

1.4 As part of an inspection of the GAA and the IFA provision within the CSP, the Education and Training Inspectorate (Inspectorate) visited 31 of the schools participating in the programme. In addition, the Inspectorate:

- reviewed reports and other documentation prepared by the GAA and the IFA;
- scrutinised coaching materials and other resources prepared by both Associations in support of the coaches' work in the schools;
- observed 42 activity sessions;
- read self-evaluation reports prepared by almost all of the schools visited; and
- held discussions with principals, physical education co-ordinators, teachers, DE officials, GAA and IFA staff and a number of the GAA and IFA coaches.

1.5 The schools visited as part of the evaluation are set out in the Annex.

2. SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

2.1 The Inspectorate's evaluation of the strengths to date of the programme include:

- the extended opportunities to build upon the children's basic movement skills and transfer of skills acquired to other areas of the physical education (PE) programme;
- the provision of good opportunities for the teachers who lack confidence in teaching PE to develop knowledge of games skills, observe the coach and then adapt the activities for use in their own lessons;
- the high levels of participation and active engagement of all of the children;
- the developing links made between the work completed by the coaches and the use of Fundamental Movement Skills (FMS) in a range of contexts;
- the inclusive nature of the work in schools ensuring active participation of all children, including those with special educational needs and newcomer children; and
- the effective working relationships established among the coaches, children and their host schools.

2.2 The Inspectorate's evaluation of the areas for improvement include the need to:

- provide opportunities for collaborative planning that focuses on, as a starting point, the learning outcomes within the host school's overall PE programme and assessment of the children's physical developmental needs;
- identify more clearly how the programme supports the schools in improving the children's achievements in other areas of the curriculum particularly in literacy and numeracy; and
- develop the coaches' skills in evaluating their work and in particular how they provide opportunities for the children to organise their thinking and apply their skills in increasingly challenging contexts.

3. RECOMMENDATIONS

3.1 There are several key areas for development which the governing bodies of sport involved in the programme, schools, DE and others need to address.

These include the need for:

- more information to be shared with schools and the principals to ensure that the programme aims are clearly recognised and the roles and responsibilities of the schools and coaches clearly established. **(DE, GAA/IFA and schools)**
- greater collaboration and engagement with the schools to discuss the most effective approaches to achieving the objectives of the programme in individual schools. **(GAA/IFA, schools and (where appropriate) DE)**

- opportunities for the continuing professional development of the teachers' skills in teaching PE, in collaboration with staff from the Curriculum Advice and Support Service (CASS), with more time for collaborative planning to establish connected learning opportunities across the key stage(s). **(ELBs, CASS, GAA/IFA and schools)**
- continuing professional development opportunities for the coaches, working with staff from CASS, to develop further their skills of reflective practice and identify ways in which they can improve the planning of their work to build upon the children's prior learning and the levels of skill they have attained. **(ELBs, CASS, GAA/IFA and schools)**
- continuing professional development opportunities for further development of the coaches' skills to include the use of a wider range of learning strategies to allow the children to set their own success criteria, evaluate their own work and that of their peers. **(ELBs, CASS, GAA/IFA and schools)**
- more clarity on the long term sustainability of the programme to inform school development planning, including planning for continuing staff development to ensure the participating schools have the capacity to improve the quality of the children's experiences. **(DE)**

4. CONCLUSION

4.1 The Inspectorate evaluation identified good leadership and management by the principal and/or the PE co-ordinator as an important element in achieving the main programme objectives. In the best practice, these schools had a strong commitment to PE with good quality planning documents that guided effectively the provision in this area of learning. The CSP complemented the work the school was already doing in promoting the development of the children's skills across the activity areas that make up the PE curriculum.

4.2 The report evaluates as strengths the extended opportunities within the PE programme to build upon the children's basic movement skills and the good opportunities provided for teachers to develop their confidence in teaching PE. This report also evaluates as strengths, the inclusive nature of the work, the high levels of participation and active engagement of all of the children and the links established by the coaches and the teachers between ongoing work in Physical Education, FMS and the CSP.

4.3 To improve the programme further, the inspection identifies the need for the GAA, IFA and schools to engage in collaborative planning that focuses on the learning outcomes within the host school's overall PE programme and an assessment of the children's physical development needs. Furthermore, there is a need for the GAA, IFA and schools to identify more clearly how the programme has the capacity to link more effectively with the learning in the classroom and improve the children's achievements in other areas of the curriculum, particularly in literacy and numeracy.

4.4 As the CSP evolves there is a need for the GAA and IFA, supported when appropriate by CASS, to develop the coaches' skills in evaluating their work and in particular how they provide opportunities for the children to organise their thinking and apply their skills in increasingly challenging contexts.

4.5 Further opportunities for the coaches and host schools to monitor, evaluate and review their work together need to be included in the agreements into which the GAA and IFA and the schools enter.

4.6 In the longer term there is a need for DE and CASS to develop further the quality of the physical education area of learning in the primary schools with more effective, flexible continuing professional development for all teachers and physical education co-ordinators in primary schools.

4.7 In the areas evaluated, the delivery of the CSP is good. The programme has important strengths in most of its educational and pastoral provision. The inspection has identified areas for improvement which the associations that contribute to the programme have demonstrated the capacity to address.

The Education and Training Inspectorate will monitor the programme's progress on the areas for improvement.

Visits were made to the following schools:

Ballyvester Primary School, Donaghadee
Botanic Primary School, Belfast
Broadbridge Primary School, Londonderry
Brookeborough Primary School, Enniskillen
Buick Memorial Primary School, Ballymena
Bunscoil An tSléibh Dhuibh, Belfast
Bush Primary School, Dungannon
Castlewellan Primary School
Craigavon Primary School, Gilford
Derriaghy Primary School
Donemana Primary School
Drumahoe Primary School
Eden Primary School, Carrickfergus
Gibson Primary School, Omagh
Greyabbey Primary School
Greystone Primary School, Antrim
Harding Memorial Primary School, Belfast
Holy Family Primary School, Magherafelt
Lisnasharragh Primary School, Belfast
Olderfleet Primary School, Larne
Portstewart Primary School
St Anne's Primary School, Dunmurry
St Colmcille's Primary School, Downpatick
St Columba's Primary School, Kilrea
St Eugene's Primary School, Victoria Bridge, Strabane
St Malachy's Primary School, Camlough
St Mary's Primary School, Killyclogher
St Vincent de Paul Primary School, Ligoniel
Tannaghmore Primary School, Lurgan
Waringstown Primary School
Windmill Integrated Primary School, Dungannon

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