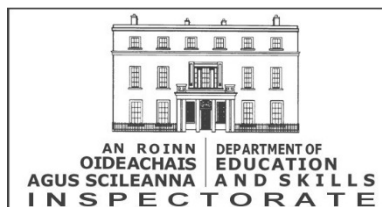


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Follow-Through Inspection
REPORT

Blackrock College,
Blackrock, Co. Dublin
Roll number: 60030V

Date of inspection: 18 September 2014



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|---|------------------|--------------------------------|--|------------------------------|-------------------|
| Date of publication/issue of original report | 27 February 2012 | Type of original report | Subject Inspection | Date of FT inspection | 18 September 2014 |
| Follow-through inspection activities | | | | | |
| <p><i>The following activities took place in the course of the follow-through inspection</i></p> <p>Meeting with senior management team Meeting with subject coordinator and relevant teachers Observation of teaching and learning Interaction with students Review of school documentation and records and pupils'/students' work</p> | | | | | |
| Recommendation in original inspection report | | | Progress achieved to date on implementation of recommendation | | |
| <p>The agreed schemes of work which are within the subject plan should be further developed by placing more focus on learning outcomes, methodologies, assessment strategies and resources for each section of the course.</p> | | | <p>Very good progress The revised and updated schemes of work, viewed as part of the evaluation, included comprehensive details of methodologies, resources and assessment strategies which are appropriately linked to learning objectives. This recommendation has been fully addressed.</p> | | |
| <p>Real-life applications of Physics and historical aspects of the subject, as outlined in the TY subject plan, should be integrated into TY lessons wherever possible.</p> | | | <p>Very good progress Practical applications of Physics are outlined in the comprehensive scheme of work for TY physics. Topics such as astrophysics and medical physics are included. Students complete high quality projects on topics such as the physics of flight and the physics of sport. Classroom practice observed included references to many real-life applications of Physics. This recommendation has been fully addressed.</p> | | |
| <p>School management should consider timetabling a double period each week for Physics in line with syllabus recommendations.</p> | | | <p>Partial progress The college operates a fortnightly timetable consisting of 8 class periods each day with the exception of Wednesdays when the college operates a six-class period day. Fifth-year physics students receive 9 class periods per fortnight and sixth-year physics students receive 10 class periods per fortnight. Students may receive an additional period of Physics each fortnight by arrangement with another subject teacher thereby creating a double period for Physics. It is acknowledged that following the subject inspection in Physics in 2012, the college made adjustments to the timetable to reduce the prevalence of 'borrowed' time. This arrangement will require further review. Many mandatory practical activities in Physics require a weekly double period for adequate completion. It is acknowledged that specific changes to the school timetable will affect other subjects. All senior science subjects have similar timetabling arrangements as Physics and will require structural timetabled changes together with Physics. There has been partial progress made with this recommendation.</p> | | |
| <p>The current practice of students choosing senior cycle subjects at the end of third year should be reconsidered so that all students can sample Physics in TY in advance of choosing the subject for Leaving Certificate.</p> | | | <p>No progress It is school policy that the academic component of Transition Year is centred around the subjects students will choose for Leaving Certificate. Option bands and corresponding class groups are formed at the end of third year. It is acknowledged that students are afforded the flexibility to change subjects during TY. However, school policy is somewhat divergent from TY guidelines which state that 'a Transition Year programme is NOT part of the Leaving Certificate programme and should NOT be seen as an opportunity for spending three years rather than two studying Leaving Certificate material.' Subject sampling is an important component of any TY programme. Currently, a minority of students can sample Physics in TY. There has been no progress made with this recommendation.</p> | | |

Summary of findings

The college continues to implement a timetable without the inclusion of weekly double class periods for Physics. Senior management is considering alternative timetabling possibilities to address this recommendation. Students continue to be requested to choose Leaving Certificate subjects from option bands on completion of third year rather than at the end of TY. Very good practice was observed in lessons during the evaluation. Students were actively engaged in learning. TY and fifth-year students experienced appropriately applied aspects of Physics as part of their learning experience. The schemes of work viewed now include learning objectives linked to assessment strategies, methodologies and resources.

Recommendations

The college should fully explore the timetabling options available to ensure that students can experience practical activities in a laboratory for an extended period of time on a weekly basis. The college should review its present TY structures so that all students can sample Physics during TY before being requested to make their subject choices for Leaving Certificate. The recommended strategy for schools is outlined in 'Transition Year Programmes Guidelines for Schools'.

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.

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 Blackrock College welcomes the January 2015 'Follow-Through Inspection' report on the provision and teaching of physics at the College.

We note and appreciate the area of very good progress identified arising from the recommendations of the original subject inspection of September 2014.

On the provision of physics on a subject-sampling basis to Transition Year students, the policy of the College has been to make subject provision to each student based on their senior cycle option choices – with first consideration given to this at the end of 3rd Year with the flexibility to change if desired throughout the TY. We confirm that our TY Physics programme can be sampled by all TY students. The College is both cognisant of and compliant with the TY Guidelines which set out that 'TY is part of the Senior Cycle experience and lays a solid foundation for Leaving Certificate studies'. In this respect, our TY Physics programme does not constitute year one of a three-year Leaving Certificate.

The College, however, continues to review and adapt each of its educational programmes and the recommendations contained in the Report will receive serious consideration.