

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Programme Evaluation
JCSP
REPORT

St John's College,
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Roll number: 60510M

Date of inspection: 21 October 2014



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN JCSP

INFORMATION ON THE PROGRAMME EVALUATION

Dates of inspection	20 th and 21 th October 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good and in some lessons very effective use was made of active teaching methodologies.
- Student behaviour and the whole-school approach to the management of students were excellent and the care for students' wellbeing as displayed by all teachers in the course of this evaluation was outstanding.
- The senior management team and all staff show comprehensive knowledge and display great commitment to the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP).
- The procedures for student selection to participate in the programme are very good and the supports put in place for students, in particular the attendance strategy are excellent.
- There is no provision for Physical Education (PE) in the curriculum provided to students following the JCSP and there is no qualified teacher of PE on staff.
- The programme is well planned and very well co-ordinated and the core team is functioning very well.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that a whole-school approach to adopting the principles of Assessment for Learning (AfL) be taken which involves teachers gaining a clear understanding of the rationale underpinning AfL and using strategies associated with AfL in daily classroom practice.
- The provision of PE as part of the curriculum for students following the Junior Certificate School Programme needs to be prioritised as a matter of urgency.
- The draft JCSP policy should be completed as outlined in the body of this report and ratified by the board of management in the course of this academic year.
- As part of the school's self-evaluation (SSE) process a formalised annual review should be established to evaluate JCSP in the school, and in this context the views of parents and students should be sought.

INTRODUCTION

St John's College, De La Salle is an all-boys voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 389. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in our Schools (DEIS) programme and also avails of supports from the School Completion Programme (SCP). The JCSP is very well established in the school and there are currently 63 students enrolled in the programme. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality to teaching and learning was very good.
- Lessons were well planned and there was good preparation of suitable resources. In planning for lessons it is recommended that the development of students' oral literacy be given greater attention. In particular, teachers need to plan how they will enable students to talk about their learning during lessons.
- The pace of all lessons was very good and teachers displayed great patience and understanding of their students. Classroom activities were well sequenced and this helped the progression of student learning.
- The good practice of sharing learning outcomes with students was noted at the start of most lessons. This is effective as it focusses students on what they are going to learn. It is suggested that more frequent reference be made to prior learning at the start of lessons in order to anchor new material in previously acquired knowledge. Strategies recommended by the JCSP support service such as the use of "What we know, What we want to know, What we have learned" (KWL), the use of graphic organisers and mind maps should all be considered.
- Very good methodologies were used to support student learning. In one lesson the use of 'show me' boards proved most effective with the learners. In some lessons there was an emphasis on active teaching methodologies and students were asked to create dialogues in pairs. Student engagement in these lessons was optimal.
- Very good attention was paid to the development of literacy. Key words were explained to students and time was allocated for students to record these words. To extend this good practice, it is suggested that students be given opportunities to use the key words to demonstrate skills of application in addition to comprehension.
- Assessment of student learning was based mainly on questioning in the course of lessons. As a key recommendation to enhance student learning, it is suggested that teachers gain a comprehensive understanding of the rationale underlying AfL and implement strategies associated with AfL, such as the use of 'show me' boards, traffic lights, think-pair-share, no hands, self and peer assessment on a whole-school basis.
- Teachers work very effectively to help students organise their own learning. In lessons teachers had student folders ready for use and collected them at the end. This is a great support for students in successful learning.
- Students who have additional educational needs receive very good additional resources through learning support and resource teaching. Last year as part of the school's eLearning strategy, tablets were purchased for these students. It was reported that the students experienced great success through the use of this technology. The tablets are not available in

this academic year. However, it is suggested that when resources permit that tablets be made available again so as to enhance the learning for these students.

- The management of students and student behaviour in all lessons were excellent. This is due to a very good whole-school approach to implementing classroom routines. For example, all students lined up quietly before coming in to class. This ensured a calm classroom atmosphere from the beginning.
- The care for students' wellbeing as displayed by all teachers in the course of lessons and in discussions as part of this evaluation was outstanding. Students are regularly encouraged through the use of positive comments in journals and reward stickers placed on their written work.
- The learning environment in all classrooms was very positive. There were charts of key words, student work and posters regarding learning styles on display. Teachers have put in a huge amount of work to ensuring a print rich environment for their students.

PROGRAMME PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The JCSP is a very well established programme in the school and is most effectively supported by senior management. The support for the programme is evidenced by the fact that there is a co-ordinator in place and staff are facilitated to attend in-service courses provided by the JCSP support service.
- There are systematic procedures in place for the selection of students who will participate in the programme and a comprehensive list of criteria is laid out in the school's JCSP policy. The selection of students is done mainly through the rigorous collection of data from feeder primary schools and also from a wide variety of tests done prior to entry into and in the course of first year. In addition students' progress is constantly reviewed.
- Once selected for JCSP students are placed in discreet class groups. This arrangement could be reviewed for certain subjects to enable a greater mixed-ability ethos.
- The programme on offer is quite broad in terms of the provision of subjects and it is very good that literacy and Information Technology lessons are timetabled. However, this year PE has not been offered. This is a major deficit and requires urgent review. It is recommended that the school prioritise the provision of PE and the sourcing of a qualified PE teacher, as soon as resources permit.
- Students entering first year choose optional subjects in advance. It is now timely to review of the curriculum offered to students in JCSP and also the manner in which subjects are chosen. Consideration should be given to offering a short taster programme for students and to increasing the provision of vocational guidance to first year students so as to ensure they make informed subject choices.
- As part of whole-school support for students an excellent attendance strategy is in place which focusses on regular class rewards for the best attendance. It is evident that attendance is improving and this is due in large measure to the systematic efforts of the post holder with responsibility for attendance, all staff and the SCP officer.
- There are very good links between the school and home and this is facilitated greatly through the work of the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) co-ordinator. The HSCL provides valuable support to parents and students through regular home visits and classes run for parents.

PROGRAMME PLANNING, CO-ORDINATION AND EVALUATION

- There is a draft JCSP policy in place and it is suggested that this be updated to include information on the initiatives that will take place this year, the lists of students in each year, the curriculum offered and the organisation of class groups. Information on the JCSP resources available, a whole-school approach to teaching methodologies in JCSP and on assessment procedures for the students should be included. The policy should then be ratified by the board of management.
- The JCSP is very well co-ordinated and the co-ordinator is effectively supported by a core team who meet frequently. Student profiling meetings take place regularly which assist greatly in planning for students' needs.
- Currently the JCSP is evaluated informally by the core team and school management. It is recommended that structures be put in place to conduct a more formal review which includes capturing the parent, student and teachers voices by means of surveys and questionnaires. This will also feed into the school's overall self-evaluation processes.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal and relevant key staff at the conclusion of the evaluation.