

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Religious Education (RE)**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Loreto College Foxrock
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Springfield Park Foxrock Dublin 18
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60240J

**Date of Inspection: 12-12-2019**



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agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 evaluated learning and teaching in Religious 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.

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.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	11 and 12 December 2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 7 lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Loreto College Foxrock is a fee-charging school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust with a current enrolment of 516 girls. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the new Junior Cycle, the established Leaving Certificate and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

This evaluation is concerned only with the preparation of students for Junior Certificate/Cycle examinations in the subject.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with exemplars of highly effective practice noted in certain areas.
- Lessons were characterised by positive and affirming interactions between the students and teachers and a positive and respectful atmosphere prevailed.
- Lessons were student centred and teachers used a variety of teaching and learning methodologies, supported by high quality resources including video clips and props to engage and motivate students.
- Differentiation practices were effective in all lessons, with some scope for improvement in the level of challenge offered to students.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good; management provide valuable support to the RE department.
- Teachers' collaborative practice is very good; the schemes of work are of a high quality and include a reflective aspect.

#### Recommendations

- Teachers should explore further collaborative practice opportunities with a view to sharing the exemplary practice observed in the RE department in some lessons, particularly in relation to sharing learning intentions and success criteria.
- Teachers should collaborate further to extend and develop upward differentiation in classroom practice in order to ensure that all students achieve their potential as learners.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with exemplars of highly effective practice noted in certain areas.
- Lessons were characterised by supportive, inclusive and affirming interactions between the students and teachers, and between students. A positive and respectful atmosphere prevailed in all lessons which was conducive to learning.
- Learning intentions were shared with students in all lessons. In the most effective lessons the learning intentions were clearly articulated and were related to skills and attitudes as well as knowledge and understanding. In some instances the learning intentions could have been further developed with greater clarity of purpose.
- Teachers' enthusiasm and passion for the subject was evident in all lessons observed and had a positive impact on student engagement levels and the successful achievement of learning intentions.
- Lessons were prepared to a high standard and were well structured. Overall, the pace was appropriate and effective and there was a good balance between teacher instruction and student input.
- Students experienced print rich classroom environments where student work was displayed, and high quality visual stimuli were present including religious objects from different major world religions.
- Student voice was enriched and enhanced through the use of collaborative learning and a range of active teaching and learning methodologies such as designing a poster in groups of four. The layout of the classrooms allowed for highly effective collaborative learning.
- Effective formative assessment practices were evident in all lessons. Students participated in structured peer assessment tasks, personal reflection opportunities and used two stars and a wish. There were some very good examples of highly effective written formative feedback in many copybooks viewed.
- In all lessons, prior learning was used as scaffolding to enhance learner outcomes. The contextualisation of key concepts and the use of subject-specific terminology were integrated well into lessons.
- In the most effective lesson, students were supported in making connections to other parts of the RE syllabus and specification, and to their learning outside the classroom. In some instances, the teacher facilitated dialogue and reflection on the diversity of beliefs and values that exist in Ireland. This is very good practice.
- Appropriate and effective resources were used, for example, props and songs relating to religious festivals, and video clips about human rights. In the most effective lessons, a range of methodologies was used to tap into the various learning styles within the classroom such as group work, using sacred texts, listening to music and reflecting. These resources were of a high quality and helped to engage all students by raising motivation and interest levels.
- In one highly effective lesson, students were afforded reflection time to explore moral issues. Students engaged very well in this lesson and were confident and capable in their

philosophical approach to the question-and-answer session, building their critical-thinking skills.

- Students displayed very good communication skills during the many collaborative tasks they were engaged in. They expressed their enjoyment in learning this way and this was evident in their high engagement levels.
- Digital learning technology was successfully integrated into all lessons. There was scope to further develop and progress the use of personal devices for extended learning tasks and to support upward differentiation.
- Differentiation was effective in all lessons. In the majority of instances, students were appropriately supported. On occasions, there was scope to ask more challenging higher-order questions to further exploit the learning opportunities for students and to push high achievers from a level of comfort to a level of challenge.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Subject provision and whole school support for RE is very good.
- The quality of leadership for teaching and learning is very good. Management have embedded a culture of improvement and collaboration in the school which is highly commendable.
- The RE department is working closely with the school's teaching and learning committee and the Additional Educational Needs (AEN) department to ensure all students are supported and encouraged in their learning.
- The overall provision for the subject on the school's timetable is very good. Junior Certificate and Junior Cycle RE is accessible to all students, and attainment levels are very good.
- All lessons are being delivered by qualified RE teachers. The RE team are diligent, and motivated, displaying a high level of commitment to the development of the subject in the school.
- Teachers' subject knowledge and expertise is well maintained through professional development training. School management is strongly committed to continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. Teachers are encouraged and supported to avail of CPD opportunities such as Junior Cycle for Teachers training days, the Magenta Principles and teach-meets.
- All teachers have access to digital technology; all first-year students, and most second-year students have a tablet device. The department should further explore the creative use of digital learning in the classroom with a view to raising motivation levels and enhancing learner outcomes.
- Commendably, a range of extra-curricular and co-curricular activities are provided by the RE team, such as trips to religious places of importance and working in areas of social justice.
- Professional Master of Education (PME) students are welcomed into the RE department and are supported through the Droichead programme and this is highly commendable.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of collaborative planning is very good and there was evidence of high levels of collegiality and support among the team. Teachers have spent considerable time creating high quality resources that were successfully integrated into lessons.
- The overall quality of individual teacher preparation for lessons observed was of a high standard.
- Planning in junior cycle is very good and takes into account the revised framework for junior cycle and the requirements and rationale of the junior cycle RE specification. Detailed schemes of work are in place and are shared in an online platform.
- The RE department meets formally throughout the year. Minutes of these meetings are kept and form part of planning and are shared with senior management. The RE team also meet regularly during their professional time to share resources and best practice. This is most worthwhile.
- The RE team is engaging with data from the analysis of certificate examinations. This effective practice is being used to inform future planning and to set targets.

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

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management wishes to express its congratulations to the R.E department in Loreto College Foxrock. It is especially pleased with the high standards of teaching and learning and the positive and respectful atmosphere highlighted by the report.

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

The school has asked the teachers of Religious Education to explore further collaborative practices such as peer observation for future planning.

The school as part of its own teaching and learning strategy is exploring upward differentiation, with a view to this becoming common practice across all subjects.

## 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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;