An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Science

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Cabra Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilkieran Road Cabra Dublin 7
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70150O

Date of Inspection: 23-01-2018

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

WHAT IS A 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 Science 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date(s) of inspection	22 & 23 January 2018
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Cabra Community College comprises a further education college and a co-educational post-primary school operating under the auspices of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board (CDETB). The school has been enrolling post-primary students since 2012 and there are 110 students currently enrolled. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Schools (DEIS) action plan and Junior Cycle Schools Programme (JCSP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in all of the observed lessons was commendable.
- All lessons were conducted in a very positive atmosphere where students were strongly encouraged to engage and participate.
- Teacher-led presentation of new content, interspersed with questioning of students to assess their level of understanding, worked well when a wide range of students was involved.
- Whole-school support for the provision of science subjects is good; Science is a core subject and is allocated two one-hour lessons per week.
- Subject planning is well organised with good schemes of work in place.
- Science resources in the laboratory are well organised; the associated preparation room is in need of some refurbishment and re-organisation.

Recommendations

- Greater use should be made of strategies which involve more students in answering questions during lessons.
- Management, in conjunction with the science department, should monitor the effectiveness of the time allocation for Science over the three years of the junior-cycle programme.
- The school should seek assistance to ensure that chemicals are appropriately stored in a safe manner, and plan for the refurbishment of the preparation room.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in all of the observed lessons was commendable.
- All lessons were conducted in a very positive atmosphere where students were strongly encouraged to engage and participate. Students' confidence was boosted through ongoing affirmation of their efforts throughout the lessons. It was evident that individual students responded well to such encouragement.
- Good use was made of the strategy of sharing intended learning outcomes with students at the start of lessons. This practice set the scene effectively for the rest of the lesson. Clear routines, such as the noting of attendance and assigned seating plans, also helped to get lessons off to a good start.
- Lesson content was communicated clearly. Good use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to present and illustrate information. Students' understanding was also facilitated by the use of many examples of Science in everyday life.
- A good level of student engagement was supported by the variety of learning activities observed in all lessons. As well as listening to the teacher's explanations and descriptions of new content, students were also required to answer questions, complete written work, and conduct practical activities.
- One of the main teaching strategies was teacher-led presentation of new content interspersed with questioning of students to assess their level of understanding. This strategy worked well, particularly where a wide range of students was required to participate by answering or asking questions. This approach would be enhanced by greater use of strategies aimed at involving more students in answering questions during lessons.
- Students' understanding of scientific language was supported by clear explanations of relevant terms and their use. Literacy skills were also supported by the very print-rich environment. Scientific posters and labelling of equipment modelled good scientific literacy.
- Practical demonstrations were well used to explain relevant scientific concepts. In addition, students were able to further their understanding by conducting practical activities themselves. These activities were well organised and the strategy of breaking down larger activities into smaller steps worked well.
- Students maintain a written record of practical activities in a variety of ways. Consideration is already being given to developing a new approach to maintaining such records. It would be worthwhile to pursue these plans and to also introduce a greater level of assessment of such records in order to support the development of relevant writing skills.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for the provision of science subjects is good.
- The school's curriculum includes Science as a core subject for all junior-cycle students. A horticulture science module in Transition Year also supports the good uptake of Leaving Certificate Biology.

- The science laboratory has been refurbished in recent years and is well equipped with relevant equipment and materials. Good-quality resources include a data projector and internet access.
- Junior Science is allocated two one-hour lessons per week. In light of the continuing implementation of the new Junior Cycle Framework specification for Science, management, in conjunction with the science department, should monitor the effectiveness of this time allocation over the three years of the programme.
- Teachers' professional development is well supported. Teachers have attended relevant in-service training associated with the implementation of the Junior Cycle Framework.
- The school values and supports the creation of links with external organisations and third-level institutions. Such links have been well used to create opportunities and new experiences for students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation for the teaching and learning of Science are of a good standard.
- Students' learning was well supported by the advance preparation of good teaching and learning resources such as worksheets and laboratory equipment.
- Subject planning is well organised. Schemes of work for each year group have been developed. It is good practice that these schemes are based on the intended learning outcomes students should achieve and links those outcomes with relevant teaching resources.
- Science resources in the laboratory are well organised and the room is well maintained. However, the associated preparation room is in need of some refurbishment and re-organisation. The school should seek assistance to ensure that chemicals are appropriately stored in a safe manner. For example, unused chemicals should be removed and appropriate cabinets should be provided for flammable chemicals.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

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

1. The schools acting principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a child protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

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

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the acting principal and subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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
Very Good	***Very good*** 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 ***outstanding*** 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
Good	***Good*** 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 *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	***Satisfactory*** 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
Fair	***Fair*** 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
Weak	***Weak*** 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;