

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Religious Education (RE)

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballinteer Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Broadford Road Ballinteer Dublin 16
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91305L

Date of Inspection: 24-01-2020



**An Roinn Oideachais
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

Dates of inspection	23 and 24 January 2020
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 4 hour-long lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Ballinteer Community School is a co-educational second-level school with a current enrolment of 408 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). Ballinteer Community School is under the combined trusteeship of the Brigidine Sisters, the Carmelite Fathers and the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). The school participates in the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion (DEIS).

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

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with many elements of highly effective practice noted.
- Teachers demonstrated commendable knowledge and passion for the subject, and all lessons were characterised by positive and affirming interactions.
- In all lessons, a student-centred approach was evident and students had opportunities to work collaboratively; in a few lessons opportunities were lost to develop depth of understanding and critical thinking skills.
- While some good examples of differentiated teaching methodologies to support students with varying needs were observed, this was an area identified for development.
- The quality of whole-school provision and support for RE is very good.
- The quality of individual teacher planning and preparation was very good, with some scope for improvement in the area of collaborative planning.

Recommendations

- Teachers should develop and implement questioning strategies that will actively engage and challenge students to think critically while encouraging extended student response.
- The RE department should implement approaches to differentiation that will provide appropriate levels of challenge for all students.
- The RE team should develop the subject plan into a working document and include details of effective methodologies and resources.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with elements of highly effective practice noted.
- Teachers demonstrated commendable knowledge and passion for the subject which had a positive impact on learner outcomes and experiences.
- Teachers created a positive and safe learning environment where students were placed at the centre of the learning experience. Classroom layout supported collaborative learning, and students experienced print rich learning environments.
- In all lessons, teachers shared and discussed learning intentions in terms of what the students were going to be able to do at the end of the lesson and in the most effective cases these were revisited at the end to consolidate the learning.
- Teachers' clear explanation of topics, effective management and monitoring of the classroom greatly supported student learning.
- Teachers effectively incorporated well sequenced activities into lessons to bring about deeper student engagement with RE key concepts and junior cycle skills such as managing information and thinking.
- In the most effective lessons, the success criteria for tasks were clearly shared with students and in one lesson the success criteria were co-created. This enhanced students' ownership of and engagement in learning.
- Overall, students were confident learners and they displayed good levels of interest in learning and in RE topics such as major world religions.
- In the most effective lessons, reflective time and consolidation of learning were key features. The use of teaching approaches which enable students to actively reflect on, engage with and apply learning and skills, as agreed in the school improvement plan should be further embedded in practice across the department.
- Overall, effective resources were used to engage and motivate learners, however, there were some missed opportunities to fully exploit the resources to allow for deep engagement with RE concepts.
- Student responses were acknowledged and affirmed. Students displayed good collaborative skills and there were some examples of creative thinking from students in their work, and in the questions they asked in relation to justice, peace and morality.
- Learner outcomes were best when students demonstrated high levels of interest and motivation, for example, where students were actively involved in role-play, a class quiz and a jigsaw strategy. These activities enhanced enjoyment levels while activating the authentic student voice.
- Purposeful homework was assigned in all lessons. There was one example of a differentiated homework task given to cater for the various learning styles and needs in the class. This highly effective practice should be further developed and embedded across the department.
- Appropriate levels of differentiation were evident through the use of targeted questioning, pairing of students and individual support during tasks. However, students were mostly engaged in the same learning activities and the same assessment tasks. Teachers should

plan for and implement differentiated learning which will offer appropriate levels of challenge and support to all students while being mindful of the importance of upward differentiation. It is positive that the department have recognised that this is an area for development and are currently introducing new differentiation strategies.

- Formative assessment was a key feature of all lessons, some effective examples included successful exit strategies, peer assessment tasks and the two stars and a wish methodology.
- Effective oral formative assessment practice was found in all lessons observed. While there were some examples of high quality written formative feedback, students should be encouraged to use the feedback provided to improve their learning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Senior management provide very good support to the RE department and promote a culture of continuous improvement and collaboration in teaching, learning and assessment.
- All students take curricular RE in junior cycle and the overall provision for the subject on the school's timetable is in line with syllabus and specification requirements. A very good distribution of lessons is evident across the week and this aids continuity in teaching and learning.
- Deployment of teachers is very good. All RE lessons are being delivered by qualified RE teachers. The team have a shared vision for the future of RE in the school and are motivated, enthusiastic and work well together as a team.
- The school fosters students' holistic development by providing a broad range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, for example trips to places of religious significance.
- Management supports, encourages and facilitates teachers to access ongoing continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities. Commendably, all members of the RE team attended the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) RE cluster day.
- The school is open to the prospect of providing Leaving Certificate examination RE in the future, if there is a demand and the resources allow.
- Each teacher has access to digital technology in the classroom to enhance the learner experience for students. It is recommended that RE teachers pilot the use of various digital strategies to further engage and motivate learners.
- Commendably, the school welcomes and supports Professional Master of Education (PME) students and provides the *Droichead* programme to newly qualified teachers.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Individual lesson preparation was effective with some examples of highly effective planning and preparation.
- The overall quality of collaborative planning is good but there is scope to develop plans particularly in relation to second and third year RE. A comprehensive RE plan is in place for first year with common schemes of work, and the layout in tabular format is clear and useful. It is recommended that the department includes details of effective methodologies and resources.

- The RE team displayed high levels of collegiality and meet formally at key stages throughout the year, and during their own professional time. Commendably the RE department members have engaged in team observation opportunities and attend teach-meets.
- The RE department is engaging with data from the analysis of certificate examinations and also undertakes a detailed analysis of students' outcomes in in-house examinations. This effective practice is being used to target specific improvements. It is positive that the RE department have identified the need to raise attainment levels and have enacted an action plan to increase attainment for 2020.

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 wants to acknowledge the commitment and hard work of the religious education department. The Board welcomes this very positive 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 Board of Management along with the senior management team will support the religious education department in implementing the recommendations.

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 <i>very good</i> 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;