

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Science and Biology

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Rosmini Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Grace Park Road Drumcondra Dublin 9
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91344V

Date of Inspection: 17-05-2018



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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 Biology 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 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

Date of inspection	17 May 2018
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Pobalscoil Rosmini is under the trusteeship of the Rosminian Order and the City of Dublin Education and Training Board. The curricular programmes on offer are: the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The current enrolment is 148 students and the last number of years has seen a decrease in the number enrolling in first year. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills programme for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching observed was good overall; inquiry-based approaches were used to provide effective in-class support that progressed learning for all students, however, this was not universal practice.
- The quality of learning was good overall; learners engaged best where they discussed, asked and answered questions, and displayed their knowledge in the subject area.
- Students worked purposefully in group-work activities and more of such collaborative tasks would encourage deeper learning and the development of oral literacy skills.
- A good teacher-student rapport and a caring positive environment were evident in all lessons.
- Whole-school provision for the subjects, in terms of teacher allocation and timetabling, is good but the school has been in temporary accommodation for a number of years making it difficult to provide a suitable learning environment for students.
- Individual and departmental planning is generally good; the programmes of work for teaching the new Junior Cycle Science specification are a work in progress and would benefit from a more systematic approach.

Recommendations

- More collaborative tasks which promote the development of oral literacy skills and deepen learning should be incorporated into lessons.
- A more systematic approach to planning for the new Junior Cycle Science specification will yield a collaborative plan which is a useful working document.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching during the evaluation was good overall; inquiry-based approaches were used to provide effective in-class support that progressed learning for all students. In some lessons, there was scope to use such approaches further.
- Lessons were generally well structured. Students had a clear understanding of the learning that was to take place in lessons. A good teacher-student rapport and a caring positive environment were evident in all lessons.
- Teachers employed a range of suitable methodologies and teaching approaches in their lessons but focus should now be on ensuring deep learning is taking place.
- Lesson content was communicated clearly; for example, good use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) to present information. This approach included visual materials such as videos or graphics to illustrate theoretical content and promote discussion. However, there were occasions where opportunities to promote discussion and develop students' oral skills were missed.
- Students worked purposefully in group-work activities and this was most effective where desks were arranged in clusters. Further use of such collaborative tasks would encourage deeper learning.
- Many learners' notebooks provided an accurate reflection of their work and are useful study tools. However, a minority of students had no notebook/hardback copy with them in the lessons observed. Teachers should encourage all learners to maintain records of their work which can be used for study.
- There was a good level of one-to-one instruction with teachers providing direction and explanations in a differentiated manner. Incorrect responses were clarified and dealt with sensitively. In these instances, teacher differentiation of the subject matter in terms of content and outcome was good.
- Teacher-led questioning was a commonly used methodology. Such questioning was very effective in promoting learning when questions were directed to named individuals, sufficient time was allowed for answering, and supplementary questions probed understanding. In some lessons, learners provided very short or one-word answers and these should be followed up for expansion and higher-order thinking.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school provision for Science and Biology, in terms of teacher allocation and timetabling, is good.
- The school has been in temporary accommodation for a number of years and this has made it difficult to provide a suitable learning environment for students. Science subjects are taught in a temporary laboratory with limited space for equipment and displays of student-generated resources. Good ICT equipment was noted and used in all classrooms visited.
- Students have very good access to the subjects. All students study Science in first year. Almost all students choose to study Science for Junior Certificate and the uptake of the subject is very high. Biology is a popular subject for Leaving Certificate and Science and Horticulture are provided in the Leaving Certificate Applied programme.
- Senior management encourages teacher participation in continuing professional development (CPD). Teachers' engagement in CPD is very good. The involvement of one teacher in delivering training to student teachers is noted as positive.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Individual teacher plans and science departmental planning were generally good; the programmes of work for teaching of the new Junior Cycle Science specification are a work in progress and would benefit from a more strategic approach. Teachers had prepared well for the observed lessons.
- Teachers are very open to collaboratively developing and sharing teaching resources. It is good practice that ICT is being used to facilitate subject planning and sharing of such resources. There is scope for teachers to observe each other teach in order to disseminate good practices.

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 of Rosmini Community School accepts the report of the Science and Biology inspection of 17/5/2018. The board is pleased to see that the report acknowledges the good teacher-student rapport and the positive learning environment in all lessons as these are hallmarks of the characteristic spirit of our school. The board is also pleased to note that the standard of planning, preparation and teaching is good overall and that access to the subjects and teacher engagement in continuous professional development were both found to be very good. The board acknowledges the challenges of our current temporary accommodation and, planning permission having been granted, looks forward to the opening of our new school building.

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 report recommends a more systematic approach to the new Junior Cycle planning and the incorporation into lessons of more collaborative tasks to promote oracy and deepen learning. The board accepts these recommendations and will ensure that the recommendations are adopted across the curriculum so as to encourage the continuous development of teaching and learning in our school.

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;