

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

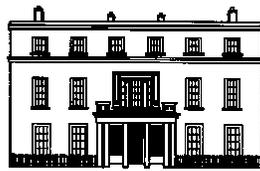
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Civic, Social and Political
Education (CSPE)**

REPORT

**St. Brendan's Community School,
Birr, Co.Offaly
Roll number: 91491L**

Date of inspection: 12 April 2013



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

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN CIVIC, SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL EDUCATION (CSPE)**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	29 and 30 April 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods.• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching observed was very good overall.
- A range of innovative and creative teaching methodologies was used to advance lessons including very good use of active learning methodologies.
- Individual planning for the subject was generally good with some very good individual subject planning documentation evident.
- Assessment in CSPE, both formal and informal, is an area for development in the school.
- The school community provides good support for citizenship education in its broader sense through the establishment of a students' council, green initiatives such as an anti-litter week and a number of co-curricular activities such as visiting speakers and visits to places of civic importance.
- Subject department planning is in its initial stages and needs development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assessment in CSPE should be addressed in a consistent manner, formal in-house examinations in CSPE should be included in the in-house examination schedule, homework should be assigned and corrected frequently and assessment arrangements for second year students should be reviewed.
 - Collaborative planning arrangements for CSPE should be addressed, a coordinator should be appointed from within the team of teachers teaching CSPE, meetings should take place regularly and minutes of meetings should be kept.
 - Schemes of work for the subject should be agreed between members of the department and common testing for the subject should take place.
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INTRODUCTION

St. Brendan's Community School is a co-educational post-primary school in the town of Birr. CSPE is a core subject for junior cycle students either in the form of a timetabled lesson, as it is for first and third year students or a four day module for second year students. At the time of the evaluation there were 883 students enrolled.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching was very good in lessons observed.
- In all lessons the proposed learning outcomes of the lesson were made clear in writing at the outset and a review of learning took place in the majority of cases.
- Lessons were, in the main well-structured and a range of innovative and creative teaching methodologies was used to advance the lesson including very good use of active learning methodologies such as group work, pair work, student presentations and student surveys. These good practices are commended and are in line with the emphasis on active learning in the CSPE syllabus.
- Some high quality resources were used to structure the lessons including teacher produced PowerPoint presentations and film and audio clips. Teachers are encouraged to share these resources in an electronic folder on the school's intranet system.
- The quality of student learning was good overall and student engagement and interest was evident in lessons observed.
- There was a good emphasis on the acquisition of subject specific vocabulary in some classrooms visited. It was suggested, in two classrooms visited, that better use could be made of the classroom walls to display student work and key vocabulary associated with CSPE.
- Very good pupil-teacher relations were evident in lessons observed and classroom management was very effective.
- Assessment in CSPE is an area for development in the school. Second year students are not timetabled for CSPE. However, they do undertake a four day CSPE module in term two. Students are not assessed individually on their learning in this module although they do take part in a table quiz on the fourth day as a revision exercise. Apart from the third year trial examinations, no formal or informal examinations in the subject take place. Parents or students do not receive any regular assessment information about student progress in CSPE. Three third year classes and one first year class were visited over the course of the evaluation. An examination of student copybooks, journals and exam papers in the third year classes visited showed little evidence of regular examination-style assignments. Homework is assigned in some classrooms visited and in one classroom visited students regularly complete a diary log of learning achieved but no monitoring of student work, apart from the action project, was evident. Most teachers interviewed agreed that student learning in the subject is mainly assessed through classroom questioning and teacher observation
- It is strongly recommended that teachers and management ensure that assessment in CSPE is addressed in a more consistent manner. Homework should be regularly set and monitored and formative feedback should be given. Third year students should get

regular practice at examination style questions. A more individualised assessment arrangement for second year students should be adopted. Teachers should also assess student progress through the means of formal and informal examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- All junior cycle students undertake a course of studies in CSPE in line with the recommendations of Circular M13/05. First and third year students have one timetabled CSPE period per week. Second year students undertake a four day module of CSPE that incorporates a variety of activities including guest speakers and a visit to the local courthouse. This arrangement is reviewed every year which is good self-evaluative practice.
- Teachers are mainly allocated to class groups to whom they teach another subject in line with the recommendations of Circular M13/05. However, a very large team of fifteen teachers is involved in teaching the subject. This makes it difficult to arrange subject planning meetings and for teachers to build up a level of expertise in the subject. It is recommended that the school work towards having a smaller team of teachers teaching CSPE.
- A storage area for resources is maintained and management is open to the purchase of resources. An electronic folder should be made available on the school system and electronic resources sourced or prepared should be downloaded to this folder.
- Whole-school assessment arrangements for the subject are unsatisfactory. CSPE is not included in the in-house examination schedule, apart from in the third year trial examinations. It is recommended that CSPE features in the in-house examination schedule and that parents receive regular reports of student progress in the subject in line with the recommendations of Circular M13/05.
- Many measures are in place to support the development of citizenship education in its broadest sense. An anti-litter week takes place each year and the school has been proactive in the area of composting and recycling. A student council promotes students' democratic participation in the affairs of the school.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Department planning for the subject needs further development. Subject planning meetings are held once a year to plan the second year CSPE module. Otherwise, teachers largely work independently of one another, although some informal sharing of resources takes place. Opportunities for team planning should be afforded to the CSPE team of teachers in line with that provided for other subjects as recommended in Circular M13/05. Minutes of meetings should be kept.
- While the subject coordinator offers very good support to teachers new to the subject, he is not presently teaching the subject. As Deputy Principal he also has a large number of other responsibilities. It is recommended that a subject coordinator be appointed from within the team of teachers teaching the subject in line with perceived good practice.
- The subject planning documentation is a short document laid out in the form of the School Development Plan template. The documentation outlines some organisational details but no schemes of work for the subject. The aims and objectives for the subject should be adapted to concur with the aims and objectives of the CSPE syllabus. Common

schemes of work, linked to common assessment should be developed for all year groups. These schemes of work should outline available resources and suggested methodologies for the different topics covered. This will help facilitate common assessment, which is recommended.

- Individual planning of a good quality was evident, including planning for resources. Yearly planning for the subject is undertaken by most teachers and some very good individual planning documentation was evident both in relation to the lessons observed and the second year module.

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. 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.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Following on from the exit conference with the Inspector in April 2013 assessment arrangements have been reviewed:

All Second Year students sit CSPE as part of our in-house exam schedule.

Third Year – Collaborative planning arrangements are in place with subject department meetings at the beginning of each term. Schemes of work are agreed between members of the department and common testing for the subject takes place.