

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Science  
REPORT**

**Luttrellstown Community College  
Mill Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin 15  
Roll number: 76130P**

**Date of inspection: 11 October 2011**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SCIENCE**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning across all of the lessons observed was very high.
- The pace, structure, management and methodologies used in lessons ensured that students were actively engaged in learning.
- Practical activities were well organised with an investigative approach but students' work in this area is not credited in school examinations.
- There is very good whole-school support for the provision of Science.
- The quality of subject department planning is very good.
- The science department has a clear vision for the future development of the provision for science and good systems are being put in place to support this vision.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Students' achievements with respect to the completion of practical activities should be reflected in school examinations.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Luttrellstown Community College is a new co-educational post-primary school under the aegis of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee. It was established in 2009 and currently has an enrolment of 135 students drawn from a variety of social and cultural backgrounds. The school is situated in temporary accommodation at present and plans to move to a purpose built permanent setting in 2013 are well advanced. At present the school has students in first, second and third year of junior cycle. Planning for the extension into senior cycle, including a possible Transition Year, is underway.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in all of the lessons observed. Students were actively engaged in learning through the use of a variety of teaching strategies.
- A high level of advance preparation and planning ensured that lessons were well paced and structured and thus provided a good learning experience for students.
- Very good use was made of resources such as worksheets and the interactive whiteboard to support student learning.
- Lessons were very well managed. A positive and affirmative relationship between students and teachers was reflected in the classroom interactions and in the displays of students' work in the laboratory.
- Students' progress during lessons was well monitored through the good use of directed and higher-order questions.
- There was a strong emphasis on the setting and correction of homework. The assignment of homework at the start of lessons for the topic to be covered during the lesson is a good approach to ensuring that students are focused on the work in hand.
- All class groups are of mixed ability and differentiated materials were well used to support students' learning as necessary. It is planned to provide extension worksheets for the more able students.
- In line with the principles of assessment for learning, students were informed of the learning objectives at the start of each lesson. In this way, it was clear to students what they were expected to know, or to be able to do, at the end of lessons. Learning was reinforced by the use of these objectives at the end of lessons to assess the students' success in achieving the objectives.
- Practical activities were well organised and carried out in an investigative manner. Students' records of practical activities are checked for completion and correctness but are not credited in school examinations. It is recommended that, in line with practice in the Junior Certificate examination, some award be given for students' practical work in school examinations.
- The content of lessons was communicated in a clear and lively manner. Good attention was given to the literacy needs of students through the identification and exploration of key terms related to the lesson topics.

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

- There is very good whole-school support for the provision of Science.
- Science is a core subject. Classes are of mixed ability and of an appropriate size for a practical subject.
- Timetabling arrangements for Science are good. All classes have a weekly double period for the completion of practical activities and the overall allocation of lesson periods is in line with syllabus guidelines.
- Though in temporary accommodation, the laboratory and associated resources are in good order and well equipped. The collaborative approach to the use of the laboratory, as seen for example in the preparation of kits of equipment for specific topics, is good practice.
- The laboratory is equipped with an interactive whiteboard and very good use was made of this and other information and communication technology (ICT) facilities to support learning.
- The school is very supportive of the establishment of a professional and collaborative ethos within the science department and is also very supportive of teachers' continuing professional needs.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning is carried out through both formal and informal collaboration among the science teachers. A good record has been maintained of how the provision for science has developed since the establishment of the school.
- The science department has developed a clear vision for the future development of the provision of science. This vision recognises that the school will grow over the coming years and commits the science department to the setting of high standards in its work.
- The planning work completed to date is of a high standard and good systems are being established for the future development of the provision for science as the school continues to grow over the coming years.
- Good practice is evident in the analysis of students' outcomes in school examinations. This information will assist in identifying trends and issues for future consideration in the planning process.
- The science plan includes sections on relevant whole-school policies such as the homework policy and the health and safety policy. The science staff has been very involved in the development of the school's health and safety policies and procedures with a view to ensuring the safety of students. It is suggested that a procedure for dealing with an emergency, where it is the teacher who is injured in the laboratory, be formalised and added to the materials already completed
- Detailed schemes of work based on learning outcomes have been developed for the first, second and third year of junior cycle. These are supplemented with more detailed plans for the teaching of particular topics.
- Very good use is being made of online facilities to support the planning process and the sharing of expertise among the science teachers.

- Common assessment of class groups is a feature of good practice in the planning for Science.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the 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 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.**

The Board of Management and staff are greatly encouraged by this report and believe that it reflects a true and accurate account of the quality of Science provision in our school. This experience was both positive and affirming for our Science teachers who are always committed to the highest standards.

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

We welcome the recommendation made by the inspectorate – student performance on practical activities is now reflected in examinations.

We wish to thank the inspectorate for the advice and encouraging words.