

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Collinstown Park Community College,
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Roll number: 70041J**

Date of inspection: 8 April 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 CIVICS, SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL EDUCATION (CSPE)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	6-8 April 2011
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Very good quality teaching and learning was observed across the department over the course of the evaluation.
- Lessons were well structured with a good variety of methodologies in use including active learning methodologies. Very good attention to student literacy was in evidence in all classrooms visited.
- Student-teacher relations were very good in all instances. A secure and supportive environment was in evidence in all lessons observed.
- Good assessment strategies were noted in most instances and good assessment outcomes are in place. It is positive that a CSPE assessment policy has been formulated.
- Very good curricular provision is in place. The subject is further supported by a wide range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities.
- Good department planning was noted and the department is well coordinated.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should agree a common plan for each term and very effort should be made to introduce common testing, differentiated for student access, across the department.
 - A smaller core team of CSPE teachers should be created.
 - The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in the classroom should be extended and resources created or downloaded should be stored in a folder on the school system.
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INTRODUCTION

Collinstown Park Community College is a co-educational post-primary school in Clondalkin, Dublin 22. It is a designated community college with representatives from County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin on its board of management. CSPE is a core subjects for all classes in junior cycle. At the time of the evaluation there were 617 students enrolled. The college is included in the DEIS (Delivering Equality in Education) initiative. 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very good quality teaching and learning was observed across the department over the course of the evaluation.
- A good variety of methodologies and strategies were in use in lessons observed including teacher exposition, questioning and group work. Students were active in all classrooms visited. In some lessons pair work was suggested as a useful additional methodology.
- All lessons were well structured and good pace and timing was observed. In a few instances the proposed lesson outcomes were outlined on the board and left there for the duration of the lesson. This strategy brought additional clarity to the lesson structure and should be extended to all lessons.
- Good strategies to improve student literacy were in evidence including good attention to the consolidation of vocabulary. In many lessons students were encouraged to note down keywords. This good strategy should be extended to all classes.
- A variety of resources were used in classrooms visited. The use of differentiated resources seen in some lessons observed is highly commended. In some cases it was recommended that greater use be made of visuals in the textbook or handouts to cater for visual learners.
- Very little use of ICT was seen in lessons observed. In the context of the proposed upgrading of ICT facilities in the school, it is recommended that teachers extend their use of ICT in the classroom. Resources downloaded or created should be stored in an electronic folder on the school system for general use.
- Student-teacher relations were very good in all instances. A secure and supportive environment was in evidence in all lessons observed.
- Good assessment strategies are in place and good assessment outcomes were noted. The use of *Assessment for Learning* strategies in relation to the Action Project is commended.
- In some classrooms visited it was noted that a number of class periods is spent drafting and redrafting the Action Project report template. To sustain student interest it is recommended that all teachers strive to maintain an appropriate balance between teaching time and the transcription of the Action Project.
- It is very positive that a CSPE homework policy is in place. Homework is given in many CSPE classrooms. This should be extended to all classrooms.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good curricular provision for the subject and every effort is made to meet the requirements of Circular M13/05 when timetabling takes place.
- The subject is well supported by a wide range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities such as the Student Council, the Environment Club and visiting speakers. There is effective promotion of active citizenship in the school and many students demonstrated social and political awareness.
- A good range of well catalogued resources is available to support the delivery of the subject. CSPE class groups make good use of the Junior Certificate School programme (JCSP) library.
- A very large team of seventeen teachers is involved in the delivery of the subject with most teachers' timetabled with only one class group. This can create problems in relation to the organisation of team meetings and can make it difficult to build up expertise in the subject. It is recommended that management work towards the creation of a smaller core team of CSPE teachers.
- Very good continuing professional development (CPD) for teachers of the subject was in evidence including school-based in-service. Good in-school support, especially in relation to the mentoring of teachers new to the department, was also in evidence.
- Good communication with parents in relation to the subject was noted. CSPE features in student reports and at parent-teacher meetings.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Good department planning is in place and the department is very ably coordinated. Meetings take place regularly and teachers collaborate well on a range of issues.
 - A very good range of materials is available in the department folder including a comprehensive assessment policy that lays out procedures for the subject in the school and a well thought out subject plan.
 - It is commendable that the subject plan contains learning outcomes for four of the seven CSPE concepts. As an aid to assessment it is recommended that the department work on formulating learning outcomes for the last three concepts.
 - A suggested yearly plan is also included in the planning materials but it was noted that teachers generally work independently of the plan and set individual formal tests.
 - Every effort should be made to set common tests, differentiated for student access. To facilitate this, teachers should meet and agree termly schemes of work and adhere to the agreed plan.
 - Department meetings should include discussions about teaching and learning and suggested methodologies for different parts of the course. Outcomes from these discussions can be fed back into the department plan.
 - Good individual planning for lessons was in evidence. Teachers keep good records and plan well for resources.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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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 wishes to acknowledge the courteous and professional manner in which the subject inspection was conducted. The Board considers this report to be an endorsement of teachers' hard work and commitment and congratulate the CSPE department.

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

The school has endeavoured to implement fully the recommendations contained in this report.

- Recent installation of interactive white boards, data projectors and teaching PCs has enabled teachers to extend their use of ICT in the classroom. Teachers have received and continue to receive on going training to enhance and increase their ICT skills
- The CSPE subject department and indeed all subject departments have been provided with electronic folders on the shared network in which subject plans and resources are shared. This will enable CSPE teachers to fully exploit the use of visual materials and it is envisaged that the sharing of resources will also involve teachers in discussion concerning teaching methodologies
- CSPE teachers continue to improve their subject plan by agreeing on a common plan for each term
- The creation of a small core group of CSPE teachers is being reviewed
- The testing of students will include greater use of common tests, differentiated for student access, across the department. Teachers continue to explore how assessment can be exploited to provide useful and diagnostic information.