

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

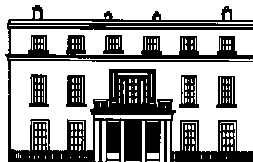
**Subject Inspection of Science
REPORT**

Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne

Dingle, County Kerry

Roll number: 915110

Date of inspection: 10 December 2013



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	9 and 10 December 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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of learning and teaching observed was uniformly of a high standard and was typified by a very positive atmosphere in all lessons.
- Considerable care was taken in all lessons to ensure students comprehended the scientific concepts. Where students had little Irish, English was used as a medium of instruction when required.
- Effective group work enhanced student interest and participation in all lessons.
- Students perform well in Science in the Junior Certificate examination.
- Whole-school support for the sciences is very good. Students are provided with the opportunity to study science in all programmes.
- Laboratories are very well resourced, and provision for information and communication technology (ICT) is very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Some lessons began by outlining the intended learning outcomes to the students and revisiting these outcomes to ascertain student learning. This very good practice should be used in all lessons.
 - Teachers should consider how best to use assessment for learning (AfL) strategies in lessons.
 - It is recommended that students' written work be monitored to a greater extent.
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INTRODUCTION

Pobalscoil Chorca Dhuibhne is the community school in Dingle, providing post-primary education through the medium of Irish for all students in the surrounding area of west Kerry. The Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes are offered to the students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of learning and teaching observed was uniformly of a high standard and was typified by a very positive atmosphere in all lessons.
- Preparation for lessons was a very good; lessons were well structured and the pace was suitable to students' learning needs. Some lessons began with teachers outlining the intended learning outcomes to the students and revisiting these outcomes to ascertain student learning. This very good practice should be used in all lessons.
- Of note in classrooms was the skilled and consistent use of a range of teaching strategies that facilitated meaningful student participation in the lessons. Teachers uniformly engaged and motivated students in their learning through a combination of effective questioning, structured activities, including experimental work and focused feedback.
- ICT and white boards were very effectively used to provide visual images and to outline the main points of the scientific concepts under consideration.
- Commendably, an investigative approach to the teaching of Science was observed. Students conducted their practical work in a safe and skilful manner.
- Considerable care was taken in all lessons to ensure students comprehended the scientific concepts. Where students had little Irish, English was used as a medium of instruction when required.
- It is good to note that development of students' oral literacy in relation to Science was effectively facilitated through student group work and whole-class discussion. There was a good focus on the development of subject-specific terminology.
- In one lesson an appropriate focus on enhancing students' numeracy skills was evident. A whole-school approach to enhancing students' numeracy skills is recommended.
- Good or very good teacher-student rapport was evident in the lessons visited. Classroom management was very satisfactory. There were examples of students' contributions being invited and used to develop lesson content. This is very good.
- The uptake of Science at higher level for Junior Certificate is good and students perform well in the examinations Science.
- Effective learning was more easily facilitated through clear linking with previous knowledge and understanding. Learning in class was consolidated by written homework. This is positive. Increased monitoring of students' written work is recommended. Teachers should consider how best to use assessment for learning (AfL) strategies in lessons.
- Student progress is monitored through questioning in class and also through monthly summative assessments. This is good practice. An average mark of students' performance throughout the first term is reported home. Common assessments are used for end-of-

term summer examinations thus ensuring standardisation of learning across the year groups. This is praiseworthy.

- The science department allocates a percentage of the marks for Coursework A and this is included in the final grade of students' achievement at Christmas and in the summer. This is very good as it reflects assessment practices in the Junior Certificate science examination.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for the sciences is very good. Science is a core subject in junior cycle and in TY. Students are given the opportunity to study Agricultural Science, Biology, Chemistry and Physics for Leaving Certificate.
- Classes in Science are of mixed ability. This is very good as it raises expectations among all students and enables the students to aim for the optimum level at least until the pre-examinations are completed, when final decisions are made.
- Good timetabling facilitates the effective delivery of the sciences, with almost all class groups having a good spread of lessons throughout the week.
- Facilities for the teaching of Science are very good. The school has three well-resourced laboratories and a demonstration room. A very good approach to health and safety pertains in the science department. A high standard of safety equipment is present in the laboratories and preparation areas, and chemicals are stored in accordance with Departmental guidelines. It is good to note that recommendations made during a previous science inspection in relation to safety have been implemented.
- The school has a high level of ICT which supports teaching and learning. Data projectors and laptop computers are available in the laboratories.
- Science teachers actively engage in continuing professional development activities. This is very good. Commendably, students are given opportunities to participate in a good level of co-curricular and extracurricular activities in the sciences.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A common programme of work for Science has been devised. The main topics to be covered and detailed learning outcomes are outlined, as are homework and assessment strategies. Teaching and learning strategies to enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills are also iterated. This is positive. Building on this good work, consideration should be given to linking resources to be used to specific learning outcomes.
- Commendably, the school analyses students' performance in Science in certificate examinations. It is recommended that these be included in the science plan in order to more easily facilitate their use in informing teaching and learning. In addition trends in performance could be more easily monitored. Comparison with student performance in other subjects could also provide a useful yardstick.
- The informal communication among the members of the science department is augmented by a number of formal documented meetings each year, which are organised by the co-ordinator.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. 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.

Published May 2014

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 is very happy with this encouraging inspection report. The board thanks the teachers for the ongoing effective teaching, good organisation and professionalism.

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 board of management is very happy with all that is said regarding the standard of teaching and learning, the provision for Science and whole-school support and the planning and preparation for the subject. The main recommendations in relation to planning for the subject are being taken into consideration and we are already discussing Assessment for Learning (AfL) in the context of the Junior Cycle Student Award.