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

Presentation Secondary School
Kildare Town, County Kildare
Roll number: 61701B

Date of inspection: 24 March 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN CIVICS, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION (CSPE)

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

<table>
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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>23 and 24 March 2011</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods
| Review of relevant documents | Examination of students’ work
| Discussion with principal and teachers | Feedback to principal and teachers
| Interaction with students |

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall the quality of teaching and learning was high and in some instances it was very high. Good classroom management and a positive atmosphere were noted in all classrooms visited.

- The use of active learning methodologies, links with current affairs and links with student experience were very much in evidence.

- Good assessment practices were noted in some classrooms visited, including good quality questioning, frequent homework and a range of different types of written work. In other classrooms there was scope for improvement.

- Good curricular provision for CSPE, an impressive range of resources and a number of co-curricular activities support the delivery of the subject in the school.

- The CSPE department is ably coordinated and there is good expertise in CSPE on the team.

- Where relevant very good preparation for examinations was noted and examination outcomes are very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lesson outcomes should be communicated to students at the start of the lesson and a review of the learning achieved should take place before the close of the lesson.

- The range of assessment practices in use in some classrooms should be broadened to include more frequent written work, including homework. Regular monitoring of that work should take place.

- A student council should be set up to encourage democratic participation at all levels.

- All members of the department should ensure that they follow the agreed department plan to facilitate common testing.
INTRODUCTION

Presentation Secondary School, Kildare town has a current enrolment of 265 female students. CSPE is a core subject, in line with department regulations. At the time of the evaluation, the school was planning for its upcoming amalgamation with two other post-primary schools in the town.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall teaching and learning was of a high standard. In some instances it was of a very high standard.

- A range of different strategies was used to open lessons including the correction of homework and the review of prior learning. Proposed lesson outcomes were introduced at the start of some lessons. Where this was done visually and reviewed at the lesson end, it brought good structure and clarity to lessons. These practices should be adopted across the department.

- Methodologies and strategies used in lessons were very appropriate for CSPE. Active learning methodologies, such as group work or pair work were used in all classrooms visited and good links with current events and students lives were noted. This prompted very good student engagement with the topics covered.

- Good classroom management was in evidence in all lessons observed, with good classrooms routines in place. Teachers dealt with their pupils with kindness and sensitivity.

- Subject specific displays including the seven core concepts of CSPE were a good aid to teaching and learning in many classrooms.

- Good assessment practices were in evidence in many classrooms visited such as the frequent assignment and monitoring of homework as well as regular testing. Some very good examples of extended writing were noted. This is a good aid to the development of literacy skills and preparation for exams.

- Good use of questioning promoted the development of higher order thinking in all lessons observed.

- An examination of students’ copybooks and journals revealed that in some classrooms visited very little CSPE homework is assigned and students’ copybooks contained little written work. In the context of the mid-year continuous assessment format that is in use in first and second year, it is recommended that homework and written tasks, including class tests, are given frequently to all students so that teachers can monitor and assess student learning.

- Very good preparation for examinations, where appropriate, was noted with good procedures in place for the organisation and monitoring of action projects.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good curricular provision for CSPE in the school. Timetabling for the subject is very good as all classes have the recommended one period per week.
• Good co-curricular and extracurricular activities support the delivery of the subject. Many of the core concepts of CSPE are lived out in the life of the school, with a strong commitment to fundraising for third world and local charities noted.

• While it is laudable that a prefect system is in place, it is recommended that a student council is established to encourage student representation at all levels, in line with Section 27 of the Education Act 1998.

• Good arrangements for school-based assessment are in place. CSPE is included in in-house examinations, report cards and parent teacher meetings.

• There is good provision of resources for the subject including information and communication technology (ICT) resources. Resources are well-catalogued and easily accessible to all teachers. It is recommended that electronic resources created or downloaded are shared and stored in an electronic folder on the school’s intranet system.

• There is very good expertise in CSPE on the team as some team members have specialist qualifications in the subject and the school was one of the pilot schools for CSPE. Good attention is paid to the mentoring of new teachers. Opportunities for further upskilling in the subject for new members of the team should be availed of.

• In some instances teachers of CSPE have their class group for another subject and continuity of teachers is maintained from year to year. These provisions are encouraged in Circular M13/05. While acknowledging the constraints of timetabling these provisions should be extended to class groups wherever possible.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• The department is ably coordinated with formal meetings taking place at least once a year. While it is noted that there is ongoing informal collaboration between teachers, it is recommended that formal meetings are held at least once a term.

• Good planning for the amalgamation of the three schools is noted with good communication between the CSPE teams evident.

• A subject plan which follows the School Development Planning Initiative (SDPI) template is available in the planning folder along with a range of other documents. Plans should be converted to electronic format to facilitate frequent review.

• Agreed schemes of work for each year group are also available in the department folder. It was noted however, in some classrooms visited, that the department scheme of work is not always followed. It is recommended, to facilitate common examinations, that tighter planning for each year group takes place and that all members of the department adhere to the agreed plan.

• Good planning for individual lessons was in evidence including planning for resources. Good teacher record keeping was in evidence in some cases. This should be extended across the department.

• Very good outcomes in certificate examinations were noted. To inform planning it is recommended that an analysis of results achieved in the state examinations is undertaken by the department each year.

• To ensure good planning in the area of assessment it is recommended that discussion takes place at department meetings in relation to homework practices, common testing
and procedures in relation to the action project. It is suggested that the coursework assessment booklet (CWAB) might be a more useful reporting template for some students.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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