

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Science
REPORT**

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

Date of inspection: 24 March 2012



**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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	23 & 24 March 2012
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed.
- Teachers are very aware of students' individual needs and made good use of differentiated questions to both challenge and support individual students.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) resources were very well used to facilitate learning.
- In most lessons, good practice was evident in the sharing of the intended learning outcomes with students at the start of lessons. However, in some cases the intended outcomes were not revisited or assessed sufficiently at the end of the lessons.
- There is very good whole-school support for the provision of science subjects.
- Teachers work in a collaborative manner in the development of resources and teaching methodologies, and in the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the provision of Science.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that learning be consolidated by a clear assessment, at the end of lessons, of whether or not the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.
 - It is recommended that the role of coordinator of the science department be rotated among all of the science teachers over time.
 - It is recommended that some credit be given in school examinations for the completion and satisfactory recording of practical work.
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INTRODUCTION

Collinstown Park Community College is a co-educational community college with representatives from County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Catholic Archdiocese of Dublin on its board of management. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative. Junior Certificate Science is a core subject and two science subjects are provided for Leaving Certificate students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in the lessons observed.
- Lessons were well managed and paced. Clearly established routines ensured that students were quickly engaged in learning activities at the start of lessons. Students were very attentive and cooperative throughout the lessons observed.
- A very good rapport was evident between teachers and students. It was evident that teachers were very aware of students' individual needs. Differentiated questions were used to good effect to both challenge and support individual students.
- Learning was facilitated by the clear linking of lesson content to general knowledge and to material covered previously. This allowed students to speak from their own experience and contribute to the classroom discussions.
- Very good use was made of ICT resources to facilitate learning. PowerPoint presentations were used to deliver information in a simple and clear format and video clips, pictures and diagrams were used to enliven the lesson content.
- There was good attention to providing for the literacy needs of students. This was evident in the focus on keywords and the time devoted to explaining new terminology to students.
- In most lessons, good practice was evident in the sharing of the intended learning outcomes with students at the start of the lesson. This 'assessment for learning' (AfL) approach allowed students to be proactive in the learning process. However, in some cases the intended outcomes were not revisited or sufficiently assessed at the end of the lesson. It is recommended that learning should be consolidated by a clear assessment, at the end of the lesson, of whether or not the intended outcomes have been achieved.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for Science is very good. Junior Certificate Science is a core subject and students are well supported in making their choices of subjects at Leaving Certificate level.
- Class groups are of mixed ability until the beginning of third year when students are placed into groups taking higher or ordinary level Science in the Junior Certificate examination. Classes are of an appropriate size for completing practical activities.
- Timetabling arrangements for Science are generally good. However, first-year classes are assigned two double periods per week. It is suggested that the school should consider replacing one of the double periods with two single periods in order to spread the contact between the teacher and class across the full school week.
- The school has excellent resources for the teaching of Science. The school's five laboratories have been refurbished in recent years and are well resourced. Appropriate

health and safety equipment is provided in each laboratory and the school is currently planning to dispose of unwanted chemicals. Very good ICT resources are available in each laboratory.

- The school facilitates teachers' participation in relevant continuing professional development (CPD) courses. CPD has been provided for all staff on issues such as behaviour management and literacy across the curriculum.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning for the provision of Science is very good. The science department is very well organised. Science teachers meet regularly and a good record of formal department meetings has been maintained. One teacher acts as coordinator of the department and it is recommended that this position be rotated among all of the teachers over time.
- The science plan is well developed and includes schemes of work based on the learning outcomes it is intended to achieve with students. Good practice is also evident in the integration of the science plan with the whole-school planning process.
- Good arrangements have also been put in place for common assessments within each year group. However, at present no award is given in school examinations for the completion of practical activities. Hence, it is recommended that in line with the practice in the Junior Certificate examination some credit be given in school examinations for the completion and satisfactory recording of practical work.
- Good practice is evident in the use of a shared electronic folder on the schools ICT system to facilitate the sharing of teaching resources among teachers. This collaborative approach is also evident in the discussion of teaching methodologies at science department meetings.
- The lessons observed were well prepared in terms of the resources used and the structured nature of the lessons.

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, 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 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 commend the Science 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

- Report recommended that the position of department Coordinator be rotated over time
- Continued promotion of Assessment for Learning techniques with emphasis on ensuring that intended learning outcomes have been achieved at the end of each lesson. The college already has in place a team of teachers who are committed to promoting Assessment for Learning strategies within the school
- In-house Science exams/school assessment policy to include credit for students' practical work