

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Science and Chemistry**  
**REPORT**

**Beneavin De La Salle College**  
**Beneavin Road, Finglas, Dublin 11**  
**Roll number: 605110**

**Date of inspection: 12 April 2013**



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 & CHEMISTRY**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

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| <b>Dates of inspection</b>  | 11 & 12 April 2013   |
| <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 8 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 in most lessons was good or very good.
- All lessons were well managed in a positive and affirmative manner.
- An active student-centred approach was evident in the use of teaching strategies which required a high level of student engagement.
- Though some very good use was made of '*assessment for learning*' (AfL) strategies there is scope for further development in this area.
- Whole-school support for the provision of science is very good and the school has very good laboratory facilities.
- Subject planning is well established and a comprehensive subject plan has been developed which outlines agreed schemes of work and identifies good practice with respect to issues such as teaching methodologies and differentiated learning strategies.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that the science department review and further develop good practice with respect to the use of AfL strategies.
- It is recommended that the subject plan be further developed to include sections dealing with AfL and student outcomes.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Beneavin De La Salle College is an all-boys voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 490 students. The school is included in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational improvement. The school does not have a Transition Year programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons was good or very good.
- All lessons were well managed in a positive and affirmative manner. Teachers were very supportive of students.
- Lessons were well paced and content was differentiated according to students' abilities.
- Good use was made of teaching resources such as the whiteboard, worksheets and information and communication technology (ICT) to clearly communicate lesson content. However, more care could have been taken in one case to clarify students' misconceptions and to ensure the accuracy of the scientific content.
- Active student-centred teaching strategies, such as groupwork and student presentations facilitated a high level of student engagement in most lessons.
- Practical activities were well organised. However, in some cases a more investigative approach could have been used.
- Students' literacy needs were well supported. For example, new terminology was identified and explained.
- Students' progress during lessons was assessed by teacher observation and questioning. In some cases, greater use could have been made of directed rather than global questions as the latter allowed for chorus answering by a portion of the class.
- Homework was given in most lessons. However, observation of written work, such as laboratory reports, showed varying practice with respect to the correction of such work. Some work was corrected with formative comments. In other cases, it was not evident that the work had been corrected.
- Some very good use was made of AfL strategies such as identifying the expected learning outcomes at the start of lessons and the sharing of success criteria with students. However, there is scope for a more consistent and meaningful use of AfL strategies. It is recommended that the science department review and further develop good practice with respect to the use of AfL strategies. Areas which should be considered include the assessment of students' progress during lessons, how learning outcomes could be used at the end of lessons, and the assessment of written work.

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

- Whole-school support for the provision of science is very good.
- Junior Science is a core subject and three leaving certificate science subjects are provided.
- Good systems are in place to support students when choosing subjects and the uptake of Chemistry is good.

- The school has very good laboratory facilities. They are well maintained and have good ICT resources.
- Timetabling arrangements are appropriate. The allocation of four single periods per week to some Science classes provides more frequent class contact for these groups in first and second year.
- Science has traditionally been taught by three teachers, each specialising in one aspect of the course. It has been decided to discontinue this rotation system and in future classes will be taught the entire Science course by one teacher. This approach will provide a more consistent experience for students.
- Appropriate health and safety equipment is available and emergency procedures have been developed. A Health and Safety Statement refers to safety issues in science. However, it is suggested that the section referring to science be reviewed in order to ensure that the measures outlined therein are reasonable.
- There are good links between the science and learning support departments. Teachers are informed and advised about students' special educational needs. Further support is provided through team teaching where two teachers work with a particular class.
- The school is very supportive of teachers' continuing professional development and whole-staff training has been provided on areas such as the use of ICT.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject planning is well established. Regular formal department meetings and ongoing informal collaboration facilitate the efficient coordination of science activities.
- A comprehensive subject plan outlines agreed schemes of work and identifies good practice with respect to teaching methodologies and differentiated learning strategies. It also identifies ongoing issues and outlines proposed actions for dealing with these. The plan would benefit from the inclusion of a section on AfL, as referred to earlier. A review of student outcomes such as uptake of levels, uptake of science in senior cycle, and examination results would also be a useful component in the planning for science.
- Good practice is evident in the sharing of teaching experience and resources. In light of the decision to discontinue the current specialist approach to teaching Junior Science, the further sharing of good practice will provide great support for teachers now teaching the whole course.
- The collaborative approach taken by the science teachers works well in ensuring the smooth operation of the science department. However, the position of science coordinator has been held by one teacher for a number of years and it is suggested that this position could be shared among staff over time.
- Laboratory resources are well organised and resource needs are met on an ongoing basis by the school.
- Most individual lessons were well planned. Relevant resources had been prepared in advance and lessons generally had an effective sequence of learning activities.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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 was delighted with the findings of the report in that there was significant evidence of a whole school commitment to the provision of Science as it is a core subject at Junior Cycle with good systems in place to support strong uptake at senior cycle with very good laboratory facilities and well maintained ICT resources. Appropriate health and safety equipment is available supported by a health and safety statement. Teaching and learning is framed with a comprehensive subject plan supporting a collaborative approach that was evident over the inspection. There was evidence also that the quality of teaching was good or very good with all lessons managed in a positive and affirmative manner and teachers were found to be very supportive of their students. Differentiation was evident with good links with the learning support department who supports team teaching. Active student centred teaching strategies were in evidence and along with well organised practicals. The literacy needs of our students were found to be well supported and some very good use of assessment for learning was in evidence.

The Board is delighted that the inspectorate found evidence of so much positive work in the Science Department. Overall, the Board is pleased that the report is so positive because Beneavin De La Salle College is very proud of the tradition of supporting Science as a core subject and promoting its uptake at senior cycle.

## **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 agreed with all of the recommendations of the report in that they will serve to strengthen the provision for all of our students in the Science Department and ensure that the school offers an even more effective service. As noted in the report the Board has already reviewed its policy of rotating in science and this has now been discontinued. The recommendations have all been discussed at subject department meetings and a plan is in place to ensure all recommendations are implemented. The recommendation to review and further develop good practice with respect to the use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies is one that the Board recognises would be useful for all departments and so has decided to plan an input on assessment for learning in August for all teachers and ensure that further strategies are developed in the Science Department and reflected in the subject plan.

The Board would like to express its thanks to the inspectorate for such a supportive report that served to help the Board to get an insight into this very effective department and to direct the board in ensuring that the science department is enhanced and further supported by implementing the recommendations.