Subject Inspection of Civic, Social and Political Education

REPORT

Presentation College
Headford, County Galway
Roll number: 63040Q

Date of inspection: 25 November 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN CIVIC, SOCIAL AND POLITICAL EDUCATION

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</strong></td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning were most effective where a variety of methodologies facilitated a good balance between teacher instruction and the active engagement of all students in their learning.
- A good standard of individual preparation for lessons was evident with the advance preparation of resources to support teaching and learning.
- The CSPE teaching team have good access to a wide range of resources and information and communication technology.
- While time allocation to the subject is fitting, other elements of timetabling should be reviewed to support the delivery of the subject.
- The delivery of the subject would benefit from the creation of a smaller core CSPE teaching team.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Individual planning for lessons should provide for a focus on learning outcomes and facilitate a combination of teacher instruction and active engagement of students at their respective ability levels.
- Homework should be regularly set in all lessons and teachers should agree and implement procedures for monitoring written work and providing constructive feedback to students.
- Teachers of CSPE should, where possible, be allocated to classes to which they teach another subject and should, as far as possible, continue with class groups from second year to third year.
- Structures should be put in place so that a more formal approach to subject department planning is established.
INTRODUCTION

Presentation College is a co-educational voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 795 students. The school serves the town of Headford and a wide rural catchment area. An optional Transition Year (TY) programme is offered at senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the majority of lessons observed with some scope for improvement in other lessons.
- In some cases lessons had clear learning outcomes which provided a good focus for teaching and learning. It is recommended that a number of specific learning outcomes are identified at the start of each lesson. These should be reviewed at the conclusion of the lesson to evaluate the learning achieved by students.
- Information and communication technology and other good quality teaching aids were used to support learning. It is recommended however that the ability level and age profile of students is taken into consideration when selecting resources, assigning tasks and presenting lesson content.
- In most cases the topics dealt with in lessons were firmly linked to the relevant syllabus concepts. This practice should be adopted in all lessons.
- There was some good engagement of students with the lesson content through the use of active learning methodologies. In each lesson some time should also be planned for teacher instruction to ensure ongoing progression through the syllabus material.
- The more consistent use of targeted questions is recommended as a means of raising students’ expectations and ensuring all of them are challenged and included.
- The relevance of the subject to life was well reinforced through the integration of topical events pertinent to a number of the syllabus concepts.
- In some classrooms there is scope for the learning environment to be developed through the display of subject related materials and students’ project work.
- In one lesson students’ written work was of a very good standard and it was evident that homework is regularly set and provided with a very good level of teacher feedback. In some lessons students’ copybooks had very little written work and in other cases homework is not given to students. It is strongly recommended that homework is regularly assigned and monitored in all lessons given its importance in reinforcing students’ knowledge and skills in citizenship education.
- Given the significant percentage of marks allocated to the Report on the Action Project (RAP) in the Junior Certificate examination, two action projects should be undertaken and reported on over the course of the junior cycle. Teachers should also give consideration to using the Course-Work Assessment Book (CWAB) for some students in view of the variety of learning needs within the mixed-ability classes.
- There was a positive atmosphere and good relationships noted in lessons. Student behaviour was overall excellent. Where instances of inattention occur these should be addressed from the outset so that all students are fully engaged throughout the lesson.
SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Time allocation to the subject is in line with syllabus guidelines.
- Some aspects of timetabling need to be addressed. Continuity of teachers with class groups is an area for development. Teachers should, where possible, retain their class groups, particularly from second year to third year so that they can get to know their students and to facilitate continuity in planning for teaching and learning.
- In almost all cases teachers deployed to teaching CSPE do not have their class group for another subject. It is recommended that, where possible, school management allocates teachers of CSPE to classes to whom they teach another subject. As indicated in Circular M13/05 this benefits the subject and enables teachers to arrange flexible contact with class groups when undertaking and writing up action projects.
- Thirteen teachers are currently involved in delivering the CSPE programme. It is recommended that a smaller core CSPE teaching team be put in place and that teachers are facilitated to remain on the team for a number of years. This would enable expertise and interest in the subject to be developed and would allow for a more cohesive approach to programme planning and delivery.
- Teachers have at their disposal a wide range of resources which are listed in the subject plan and centrally stored. Consideration should be given to recording the merits of these resources to assist teachers in choosing suitable resources for use in lessons. Classrooms are primarily teacher-based and are well equipped with ICT facilities.
- School management is supportive of teachers’ continuing professional development (CPD), however only a small number of the CSPE teaching team has availed of in-service in the subject. In order to stay up-to-date with best practice in subject developments it is recommended that the teachers should attend subject in-service on a rotational basis as it becomes available.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A more formalised approach to subject department planning for CSPE needs to be put in place. In line with other subjects, formal meetings of the entire CSPE teaching team should be held and minutes of meetings should be recorded. One of the teachers has taken up the position of subject co-ordinator. This role should be supported by the contributions of all the CSPE teachers to the planning process.
- Programmes of work are in place and these should be further developed to include the main learning outcomes for each concept. It is now timely that teachers collaborate more closely and agree and adhere to termly schemes of work so that common assessment can be implemented across the department. Discussions at planning meetings should also focus on methodologies for teaching and learning and assessment practices.
- Formal summative assessment of students’ progress occurs at Christmas and summer and reports are issued to parents following these.
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.
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 of Presentation College, Headford welcomes this report and its findings and recommendations. We wish to thank the inspector for the professional and courteous manner in which the inspection was conducted.

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

We are currently endeavouring to address the timetabling issues identified in the report, within the constraints of a reducing teacher allocation. The other recommendations will be addressed from the commencement of the new school year.