

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Civic, Social and Political
Education
REPORT**

**St Fanahan's College
Mitchelstown, County Cork
Roll number: 71040M**

Date of inspection: 7-8 November 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 CIVIC, SOCIAL AND
POLITICAL EDUCATION (CSPE)**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection 7-8 November 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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The standard of teaching and learning observed was very good overall.
- Teacher-student rapport, positive classroom atmosphere and the use of a wide range of teaching resources were particularly important features of the lessons observed.
- Good encouragement of the student voice and the promotion of active learning methods were evident in all classrooms.
- CSPE is timetabled appropriately and well supported at whole-school level
- Although informal in the main, good collaborative planning has taken place in CSPE and teachers were very well prepared for the lessons they taught

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Occasional recommendations have been made to promote more structured group activities and more focus on the retention and use of key words and concepts by students
 - Once current limitations to internet access are overcome, the development of an intranet-folder system for the storage and use of electronic resources in CSPE merits serious consideration
 - With imminent changes to CSPE due at national level, a more formal approach to departmental planning and meetings, than is currently the case, should be taken with a view to discussing the future direction of citizenship education in the school
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INTRODUCTION

St. Fanahan's College operates as a post-primary and further education college under the auspices of Cork County Vocational Education Committee. The school has a post-primary enrolment of 157 students, a good majority of whom are male. St. Fanahan's serves the town and rural hinterland of Mitchelstown and has DEIS (Delivering Equality of Educational Opportunity in Schools) status. It has no Transition Year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall standard of teaching and learning observed was very good. Teacher-student rapport was good in all lessons and contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere where students could participate and learn without distraction.
- Most classrooms were well laid out in terms of seating arrangements which facilitated group activity and most had supportive wall décor and CSPE resources readily to hand. The fact that classrooms are mainly teacher-based is supportive of such good practice.
- All lessons were focused on topics and concepts such as human rights and interdependence which were fully relevant to the CSPE syllabus, and lesson content was pitched at an appropriate level for the year groups concerned.
- The use of a wide range of teaching resources and methodologies in the lessons observed is commended. These ranged from handouts, question sheets, reading extracts, card-matching tasks and, in the majority of lessons, significant use of information and communications technology to provide additional visual and verbal stimuli.
- Good encouragement of the student voice and the promotion of active learning methods were evident in all lessons and students took to such activities with enthusiasm. A number of students were very articulate in expressing their views on fair trade, exploitation and human rights.
- Some recommendations have been made to promote more structured group activities, to include the appointment of one reporter for each group and perhaps the allocation of such tasks to quieter students to encourage their involvement as much as possible.
- In-class questioning was good in all lessons, with most students drawn into answering questions at some stage and some good discussions developing on issues around children's rights in particular.
- Occasionally it was recommended that teachers place a little more focus on the retention and use of key words and concepts by students. This helps to promote student literacy and can be done through the visual reinforcement of terms on the board, through the encouragement of short note-making tasks and by asking students to use such key terms orally in their own sentences.
- Assigned written work was appropriate to the subject and to lesson topics covered, including stimulus-driven questions and some creative tasks. It is highly commendable that students' work is monitored by teachers and is stored safely in folders and designated boxes. The draft reports on action projects used with third years are also a good means of helping students to structure their work.
- Given that CSPE is timetabled once a week, it is recommended that a more uniform approach be taken to getting students to note their assigned homework in journals.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- CSPE is well timetabled. Each class has one period per week for CSPE and the co-timetabling of second and third year classes facilitates a team approach to lesson delivery and the organisation of action projects. If it were also possible to synchronise first year CSPE classes, this could also better facilitate an initial action project.
- Good continuity occurs in CSPE delivery, in that the teacher who has the class in first year generally continues with that class through junior cycle. In most instances, the CSPE teacher also has at least some of the students for another subject, which is supportive of the development of good rapport.
- CSPE forms part of the school's overall assessment framework and is included in end-of-term examinations, parent-teacher meetings and school reports. Teachers of CSPE also set common papers for in-house examinations, which is commended.
- CSPE is well supported at whole-school level and it is noted that all teachers of the subject are teaching it enthusiastically. Management has facilitated school trips related to CSPE action projects and supports teacher attendance at events like the Annual conference of the Association of CSPE Teachers (ACT).
- There are some current limitations to internet access in rooms where CSPE is delivered. Once these are overcome, the development of an intranet folder system for the storage and use of electronic resources in CSPE and other subjects merits serious consideration by the school as it has the potential to enhance teacher access to resources.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Although informal in the main, good collaborative planning has taken place in CSPE and the subject folder contains a clear outline of when various topics are to be covered. There needs to be a little more clarity and certainty around where the first of two recommended action projects will occur, but overall the planning documentation is good.
 - A wide range of resources are neatly stored in one of the classrooms and are available to all CSPE teachers as required. The aforementioned intranet folder could, in time, further enhance this resource bank and access to resources.
 - The CSPE folder also shows that teachers remain cognisant of outcomes in the Junior Certificate examination and it is noted that the vast majority of students have performed well in CSPE in this examination.
 - In all cases, teachers were very well prepared for the lessons they taught, both in terms of resources, lesson intentions, time management and the organisation of seating arrangements.
 - The CSPE teaching team meets regularly but informally. With imminent changes to CSPE at national level, a more formal approach to departmental planning and meetings than is currently the case should be taken. Management is urged to facilitate at least one formal meeting of the CSPE team annually, and the team is urged to appoint an official subject coordinator. This position can be rotated on an annual or agreed basis if desired.
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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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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