

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Junior Certificate Science  
REPORT**

**Chanel College,  
Coolock, Dublin 5.**

**Roll number: 60550B**

**Date of inspection: 7 October 2011**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF  
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SCIENCE**

---

**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	
<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 five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Very good teaching and learning was observed in almost all lessons visited.
- Best practice was observed where student notebooks were returned with formative comments to provide direction.
- Where practical work was observed, students worked with good regard for Health and Safety regulations.
- The subject department is well-organised by a subject co-ordinator.
- All Junior Certificate and Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) students have access to Science in the junior cycle.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Cupboards for corrosive and flammable chemicals should be housed in the chemical store.
  - The science team should discuss and share best practice in differentiated teaching methodologies with a view to broadening the use of this approach across all Science lessons.
- 

**INTRODUCTION**

Chanel College is a voluntary secondary school which was opened by the Marist Fathers in 1955. Student enrolment has increased greatly over the past five years and currently stands at 560 boys. Science is a core subject in the Junior Cycle and is provided as a module in the schools' optional Transition Year (TY). Biology, Chemistry and Physics are available to students on progression to the senior cycle.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in almost all lessons visited was very good. Teachers outlined the learning outcome at the beginning of the lesson and made very good use of every day examples to make the topics relevant.
- Good use was made of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) to enhance the lessons and appropriate use was made of the digital data projector in all instances.
- A range of teaching methodologies was incorporated into lessons and there was generally a good balance between teacher input and student activity. Teachers made good use of resources such as worksheets and posters to support the lesson content. In one lesson, it is noteworthy that students worked in pairs to produce their own posters and, in turn, used them to explain a concept to the class.
- A minority of students was observed to be off task in one instance and teachers should be mindful that the pitch and pace of the lesson should match the ability level of the students present. Students, however, were generally well behaved, attentive and participative.
- Some very good examples of differentiated teaching methodologies were observed which helped make the lesson content accessible to all students. Best practice in this regard should be discussed at subject department meetings and shared among the science team.
- The atmosphere in the lessons observed was positive and a good rapport was seen to exist between students and teachers. In some lessons, Special Needs Assistants (SNA) provided some extra assistance for the students in their care.
- Students displayed enthusiasm for Science. They engaged well with the lesson through contributions to discussions as well as readily answering questions.
- The quality of student notebooks was varied and reflected the mixed abilities present in the classes visited. Some were very well organised and all students should be encouraged to maintain good quality records of their work.
- Homework is regularly set and corrected. Best practice was observed where student notebooks were returned with formative comments to provide students with direction as to how they could improve their work. Teachers should encourage students to follow-up on corrections made.
- During practical work, students displayed well-established routines. Tasks were allocated to individual students which contributed to the flow of the lesson. Good Health and Safety practices were observed and these were encouraged by the teachers during laboratory work.
- Strategies to enhance students' literacy and numeracy skills were integrated into all lessons visited. Key words were emphasised and the correct pronunciation of new words and terms was encouraged. Students were regularly reminded to use the correct scientific terminology and units of measurement where appropriate.

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

- Curricular provision and timetabling is appropriate. Science is a core subject in the school and it is commendable that students following the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) are integrated into the mainstream Science classes.

- The school has three laboratories which have been recently refurbished. They are clean, bright and well maintained. An appropriate level of resources was evident. A print rich environment is evident through displays of student work, scientific posters, photographs and key words on the walls.
- All laboratories have adjacent preparation room and chemical store. It is recommended that the cupboards for flammable and corrosive substances which are currently in the laboratory be moved into the more secure chemical store.
- The school has a Homework and Assessment policy. It is good practice that common Science tests are held at Christmas and summer for non-examination classes. The task of devising the examination paper and the marking scheme is devolved among members of the Science team and this is good practice.
- Good links with the home are maintained through regular communication via the student journal. In addition, two progress reports are issued to parents annually as well as four reports on homework.
- A structured analysis of the State Examination Commission results is carried out and is discussed among the members of the Science team. The analysis, including points arising from the discussion, should be included in the subject department planning documentation for future reference.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Good quality plans were observed which were collaborative in nature. They are displayed in the laboratories and shared on the teachers' section of the school server.
- The subject plan reflects the mission statement of the school. Good links were evident with the Special Educational Needs department and the plans contained strategies and advice for teachers when dealing with specific learning needs.
- Individual planning was good. Lessons were generally well prepared and well structured. All materials to be used had been set out in advance and this contributed to the smooth running of the lessons.
- Subject department meetings are facilitated by management. Informal meetings of the department also occur regularly. The science department is well organised. It is co-ordinated by a subject convenor who is responsible for liaison with senior management, ordering of stock and chairing subject department meetings.
- Teachers maintain good records of students' attendance, achievement in classroom assessments and completed homework. These help provide a valuable profile on students' progress.

---

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.

*Published January 2012*