An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Civic, Social and Political Education (CSPE)

REPORT

Coláiste an Átha
Kilmuckridge, Gorey, County Wexford
Roll number: 71650Q

Date of inspection: 28 October 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN CSPE

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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MAIN FINDINGS

• The quality of teaching and learning was very good in all of the lessons observed.

• The methodologies used resulted in a good balance between whole class teaching and active student learning.

• A positive learning atmosphere was promoted in all lessons through effective classroom management.

• There is good whole-school provision and support for CSPE in the allocation of time and timetabling, the facilitation of subject planning and the provision of resources.

• Good progress has been made in subject planning, particularly in the area of strategic planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• Students should be made aware of the skills they are developing in CSPE lessons as well as their knowledge of the subject.

• When noting down work completed in lessons, students should be encouraged to identify and summarise the key points themselves as a means of promoting independent learning.

• Teachers should consider the introduction of a CSPE diary where students can record the nature of the homework assigned, how they completed it and what they have learnt.
INTRODUCTION
Coláiste an Átha is a co-educational vocational college with 257 students. It serves a rural population in Co Wexford. The school participates in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) initiative.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
- All lessons were purposeful, well structured and paced. Very good practice was noted in all lessons where the proposed lesson outcomes were written on the board. In addition, some teachers ticked off the completion of each phase of the lesson, thereby making students aware of how the lesson was progressing. To further build on these very good practices, teachers should ensure that students become aware of the skills they are developing as well as their knowledge of the subject.
- A wide range of methodologies was observed and a good balance was maintained between whole class teaching and active student learning. Question and answer sessions were effectively used, resulting in very good higher-order thinking from some students and good evidence of learning throughout. In one instance students were asked to pick out items of information in terms of their perceived importance, thereby affording them good opportunities for higher-order thinking. In this instance however, it is recommended that prior to the activity, the items of information should be read from the screen in order to explain key words and to support students with literacy difficulties. Greater use of higher-order questions could have been used in one lesson to ensure that students of all abilities were sufficiently challenged.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was effectively used in all lessons to support teaching and learning and there were some good choices of video-clips and PowerPoint presentations to support the work in hand. There was one lesson where students noted down key points from the screen. In this instance, it is recommended that instead of the teacher providing the notes to copy down, students should be encouraged to identify and summarise the key points themselves as this would help them to work independently. It would also afford them additional opportunities for active learning during the lesson in addition to promoting literacy development.
- There was very good classroom management and a positive learning atmosphere prevailed throughout. Students were encouraged to think out their answers and they demonstrated very good willingness to participate in the work of the lesson. Group work tasks were kept short and focused in line with best practice. Students engaged with the tasks assigned and the work was productive.
- Homework was given in all instances. There were some lessons where it was corrected signed and dated by the teacher. In other instances it was checked by the teacher and corrected in class. In these instances, it is recommended that the teachers take up work which involves more subjective answers as this will help them keep better track of students’ individual progress. Where homework assignments involve research consideration should be given to introducing a diary in which students record what they have completed and what they have learned from the assignment. Tests are given and recorded and progress reports completed.
SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good whole school provision and support for CSPE in the appropriate allocation of time, the provision of resources and the support for teacher professional development.
- A good range of resources has been built up for use by all teachers of CSPE and secure storage is available for examination materials. Information and communication technology (ICT) is available in all classrooms and there was good evidence that ICT is effectively used to support teaching and learning.
- Guest speakers are invited into the school to enhance the work of the classroom. To ensure optimum benefit from these interventions teachers carry out preparatory work with the students in advance of the visits. They also afford students the opportunity to consolidate their learning following these visits.
- Classrooms are teacher based and good practice was noted where CSPE related materials were posted up on the walls and referred to where appropriate during the lesson. There is also a CSPE notice-board on the main corridor which is used to celebrate subject related activities and achievements.
- Involvement in co-curricular activities has raised student awareness of social and environmental issues in the community and has resulted in fundraising and environmental projects. Some of these have been initiated by the CSPE classes and have extended into whole school initiatives.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A lot of good work has been completed in developing a subject plan for CSPE. The plan sets out the aims and objectives for the delivery of the subject, lists of relevant materials, information on active learning and documentation relating to support for students with special educational needs.
- Senior management has commendably facilitated teachers of CSPE to be free at the same time on Mondays for the purposes of planning. Minutes of meetings held since the beginning of the year indicate a proactive approach to progressing the teaching and learning of the subject in the school. The current focus on strategic planning for the purpose of improving attainment, in addition to discussion of the day-to-day organisational issues, reflects very good practice in relation to subject planning.
- Work schemes are set out in terms of the content to be studied and the available resources. There is also reference to methodologies and action ideas, to the assignment of homework and cross curricular activities. To further build on the good work completed to date teachers should identify and include learning outcomes for each year group which can be evaluated at the end of the year. Planning for the action plans which are a curriculum requirement should take into account the time of the year in which they are carried out. The choice of project should reflect the concepts being studied and should take into account the maturity of the students and their capacity to deal with the topic in question. Plans to introduce a ‘mini action plan’ in first year are welcomed as this will afford students the opportunity to carry out research and organise actions in an incremental way.
- There was very good individual preparation of the lessons observed.
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.

*Published May 2012.*
Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

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

- Students are now made aware of the skills they are developing in CPSE e.g. letter-writing skills, researching information, computer skills, organisational skills etc.
- Students are now encouraged to identify and summarise the key points of learning at the end of the session/topic.
- A CPSE diary has been introduced with first year students and all CPSE students will keep a CPSE diary in the coming academic year.