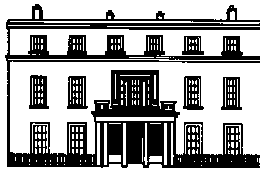


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Catholic University School  
Dublin 2  
Roll number: 60540V**

**Date of inspection: 31 January 2013**



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

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

---

**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	22 and 31 January 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 six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching ranged from fair to very good.
- Effective methodologies included questioning strategies promoting higher-order thinking and full student participation, the use of information and communication technology (ICT), artwork, pair and group work tasks.
- Student learning was most effective where the methodologies were varied and facilitated active engagement with the subject.
- There was significant variation in the assessment of student learning.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should use a variety of methodologies, prioritising those which promote active student learning.
  - Students should record work completed in class and homework should be assigned and corrected with formative feedback provided.
  - Teachers should develop collaborative work-schemes as part of subject planning.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Catholic University School (CUS) is a voluntary secondary school with 427 male students. It is a fee-charging school and serves students from the city centre and the greater Dublin area.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching ranged from fair to very good. In one instance, a swift response to recommendations made on the first day of the inspection resulted in very good outcomes in a subsequent lesson. However, there was scope for development in some lessons regarding the choice of methodologies and in the assessment of and for learning.
- Teachers outlined what they intended to do at the beginning of each lesson. It is recommended that their lesson plans be reframed in terms of required learning outcomes in order to engage students from the outset in the learning process. These outcomes should be revisited at the end of the lesson to assess student progress. Good practice in promoting interest in current affairs was noted in one lesson where the teacher invited students to report on news items from the previous week.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were more successful than others in facilitating active learning. There was a strong focus on question-and-answer sessions in most lessons. In a small minority of instances however, global questioning was the dominant strategy used and resulted in some students volunteering all the answers, while others made no contribution to the lesson. A better balance between global and directed questions is recommended in these instances to promote full student participation. Teachers should also remain mindful of the need to extend students' learning through the use of more higher-order questions. Most of the questions asked in some lessons elicited the recall of information rather than promoting higher-order thinking.
- ICT was effectively integrated into some lessons. In one instance a detailed PowerPoint (PPT) presentation combined with two short video-clips was used to support lesson delivery. To maximise the benefits of this very good preparation, the instructional component of the lesson should be better interspersed with discussion or tasks to ensure more active student participation. ICT should be used in all lessons to support learning.
- Good practice was noted in one lesson where students used artwork as a medium of expression. This resulted in some good examples of individual creativity and personal responses to the topic in hand.
- Pair or group work was used in a minority of lessons. In these instances, students were observed to work well together and to produce good responses to the tasks assigned. In one lesson, the assigned tasks initiated additional student interest in and discussion of the topic in hand, thereby further enhancing the learning opportunities. All lessons should include at least one pair or group task to encourage active and co-operative learning.
- The use of examination papers to support revision was observed in one lesson. While revision was appropriate for the time of year, alternative methodologies to answering examination questions in class should have been used to support students in this endeavour. Teachers should adopt approaches that enable students identify key points, write summaries or create mind-maps relating to the different concepts. Examination questions can then be assigned for homework as an assessment of learning.
- There was good classroom management throughout. Students were most responsive in lessons where the methodologies were varied and where the tasks facilitated active

learning. Greater use of active methodologies is thus recommended in lessons where question-and-answer sessions served as the sole or dominant teaching strategy.

- An examination of student' copybooks indicated that homework is given and corrected in some lessons. However, there was minimal recording of class work and no evidence of homework in other copybooks. It is recommended that all students keep a journal summarising the work completed in class or at home and the subsequent learning outcomes. Students should also be encouraged to develop their own graphic organisers or summaries to support effective revision. A number of the copybooks inspected contained very good examples of formative feedback. This very good practice should be extended throughout.

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

- There is appropriate whole-school provision for CSPE in the allocation of time and timetabling.
- Teachers are currently assigned to CSPE on the basis of timetabling needs and available resources. This means that there is not necessarily a core team of CSPE teachers delivering the subject from year to year. Given these constraints, senior management should consider inviting expressions of interest from teachers willing to specialise further in CSPE. This would allow for the building up of subject specific expertise in relation to planning and the delivery of the subject. Such provision would also support teachers new to CSPE.
- As part of their ongoing professional development, teachers are encouraged to avail of the CSPE in-service programmes provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST). They should also consider attending seminars held in local education centres on co-operative learning or active methodologies.
- There were varied displays of CSPE related documentation in the classrooms visited. All teachers are encouraged to extend the CSPE environment with posters and photographs of relevant political figures and persons central to the concepts being studied.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A subject plan for CSPE is in place, setting out the general aims and objectives, the attitudes and values to be promoted and the course content in terms of the concepts to be covered.
- Schemes of work have been developed by individual teachers and vary in their detail and quality. A more collaborative approach to subject planning is recommended. Work completed by individual teachers should be merged and further developed to include the concepts to be studied in each year group, the learning outcomes, the methodologies, resources and assessment practices to be used. Greater collaboration should ensure consistency in terms of the work covered. It should also help avoid the situation noted during the inspection where the same concept was taught in second year by one teacher, but as part of the third year programme by another teacher. Teachers should also build up a bank of resources to supplement the textbooks or examination papers currently used.
- Co-ordinated planning for action projects is recommended in order to maximise opportunities for external visits or guest speakers. Teachers should carry out two action projects over the three years, thereby affording students opportunities to extend their

learning in an incremental way. Students should also be encouraged to consider action projects other than traditional fundraising activities.

---

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 June 2013.*