

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Ardgillan Community College
Balbriggan, County Dublin
Roll number: 76129H**

Date of inspection: 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 CSPE**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	7 and 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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers• Meeting with the subject co-ordinator

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in CSPE was good overall and very good in some lessons.
- Appropriate active learning methodologies were deployed in all lessons.
- There was a good level of student engagement in learning.
- Assessment practice varied.
- Whole-school support is good in a number of areas.
- Subject planning is good on the whole but with some areas for development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Learning outcomes should be explicitly shared with students at the start of lessons and revisited at the end to ensure objectives have been achieved.
 - Opportunities to develop literacy should be exploited fully in all lessons.
 - Differentiation should be integrated into all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment to cater for the diversity of learners.
 - The department should agree consistent practices in relation to homework in keeping with assessment for learning (AfL) principles.
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INTRODUCTION

Ardgillan Community College, Balbriggan, opened in 2009 and is a rapidly growing post-primary school serving a diverse catchment area. It has an enrolment of 408 boys and girls and currently offers the Junior Certificate and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programmes. CSPE is provided in the Junior Certificate programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in CSPE was good overall and very good in some lessons observed.
- Individual lessons were well planned and in many lessons, choice of resources was designed to engage learners. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in a minority of lessons. Further exploration of ICT usage, where relevant, is to be encouraged given the wide availability of very suitable subject materials on the internet. The board was used well to record students' ideas in a lesson observed.
- The teaching intention was clearly conveyed to students in many lessons and best practice was observed where the learning intention was written on the board. Specific planned learning outcomes should be written on the board at the start of all lessons. These should be revisited at the end to ensure that learning has been achieved by all students.
- There was a very positive emphasis on engaging students in their learning and appropriate active learning methodologies were deployed in all lessons. Group work ensured a good level of participation in lessons observed.
- Differentiation should be integrated into all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment to cater for the diversity of learners.
- The development of literacy skills was noted in a minority of lessons, for example, concept keywords were displayed in one classroom and in another, students were shown how to access an on-line dictionary and meaning of words was checked. This represents good practice. There is scope for development in regard to the planned and consistent promotion of literacy in all cases. Classroom practice should fully implement the school's literacy and numeracy strategy.
- In a couple of lessons, reference to topical events made learning relevant and this is commended. Such good practice should be replicated in all lessons as opportunities arise.
- In most lessons, students demonstrated a good understanding of the subject concepts and were very confident in their learning. In a minority, there is need for review as students were uncertain in relation to key concepts. In all lessons, students should regularly be reminded of the range of syllabus skills and attitudes that they are acquiring through their experience of CSPE. In this regard, students in one lesson demonstrated a good understanding and exhibited very positive attitudes to the learning of the subject.
- Homework was assigned and assessed in some lessons. Very good practice was observed in a couple of cases. Developmental teacher feedback was inconsistent, however. The recording of homework assignments in students' journals also varied. In some cases there was no evidence of tasks set. CSPE assignments, whether oral, written, or in the form of research, should routinely be noted in journals.
- Maintenance of student attainment records was uneven. The CSPE department should agree a common policy in this regard which should be implemented in lessons. Students'

performance and progress should be documented so that accurate profiles can be maintained for communication to parents.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support is good in a number of areas such as timetabling, the provision of resources including ICT resources, and arrangements for secure storage of reports on action projects to be assessed in the certificate examination. The adoption of the Green Schools project by one CSPE class group has a worthwhile whole-school benefit.
- The department should agree policy and practice in relation to involvement of students in subject-related activities outside the classroom to ensure full compliance with the school's health and safety policy. This should be recorded in the subject plan.
- Currently the Student Council elections are organised through Social, Personal and Health Education classes. Given that one of the core concepts of CSPE is democracy, the school should give very strong consideration to directly linking Student Council elections to CSPE in the junior cycle.
- Tests are set for CSPE and reports on students' progress are sent home to parents. In general, common assessment is practised.
- It is school policy to ensure teacher continuity over the three years of the Junior Certificate programme and this is commendable.
- Currently, a very large team of eleven teachers delivers the subject. Senior management should establish a core team of trained and experienced teachers of the subject.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A planning structure is in place, there is a subject co-ordinator, meetings are held and records kept. The role of co-ordinator is rotated.
- The current subject plan has a number of very valuable elements and follows the School Development Planning Initiative template. The curriculum content section is well structured. Topic content is outlined clearly, a timeframe for delivery is documented and content is linked to resources. To build on this good work, specific learning outcomes for each topic (including literacy and numeracy development) should be written into the plan and linked directly in each case to assessment methods that should be used.
- There was a lack of clarity regarding the number and nature of action projects to be undertaken in all year groups apart from the project completed for national assessment. A comprehensive list of action projects should be included in the plan and the number to be completed by each year group should be noted as a guide to subject teachers.
- It is positive that whole-school literacy strategies are referenced in the plan. Further detail would benefit teachers.
- Given the variations found in the setting and assessment of homework, the department should agree consistent practices in keeping with assessment for learning (AfL) principles.
- A subject-specific visiting speaker policy should be developed.
- A record-keeping policy should be developed to ensure consistency.

- The department should identify its subject-specific continuing professional development (CPD) needs, should document these in the subject plan and should action plan to achieve objectives.
- It is positive that examinations results are being analysed. Analysis should feed into future planning for the subject.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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.