

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

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

**Ramsgrange Community School
Ramsgrange, County Wexford
Roll number: 91431Q**

Date of inspection: 8 April 2014



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	7 and 8 April 2014
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with some examples of very good practice.
- Lessons were well structured and a range of methodologies was observed, most of which were used to good effect.
- Active learning was promoted through brainstorming, creative use of information and communication technology (ICT) and purposeful pair or group work.
- Good practice was noted in lessons where note-making was encouraged and where revision and examination practice were integrated in an incremental manner.
- Good work has been completed to date in subject planning for CSPE.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- An appropriate balance should be maintained between global and directed questioning in order to ensure full student participation in lessons; greater use should also be made of higher-order questions to promote students' critical thinking skills.
 - Greater attention should be given to the design and purpose of group work tasks to ensure that they facilitate collaboration and active learning.
 - School management should endeavour to assign teachers delivering CSPE to the same class group for another subject.
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INTRODUCTION

Ramsgrange Community School is a co-educational post-primary school with 340 students serving the community of South County Wexford. The school offers a range of curricular programmes including an optional Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with some examples of very good practice.
- All teachers began by establishing learning objectives. This is good practice in encouraging students to take on responsibility for their learning. To maximise the benefits of this practice, teachers should direct the learning outcomes at their students rather than articulating them in the third person.
- Lessons were well structured and there was clear delivery of information. However, teachers should remind students of the concept being studied at the outset of each lesson.
- A range of teaching strategies was observed and most were effective in promoting active learning. Brainstorming was successfully used in some lessons to set the topic in context and to engage the students. This good practice should be considered for all lessons.
- Question-and-answer sessions were used for the purpose of eliciting new information and ideas and for the ongoing assessment of learning. In one lesson, student engagement would have been enhanced had they been asked more questions at the outset eliciting their prior knowledge of the subject. A better balance between global and directed questioning is recommended in some instances to ensure full student participation. To achieve these aims, teachers should consider implementing some of the 'assessment for learning' (AfL) strategies aimed at optimising student participation. Greater use of higher-order questions is also recommended to promote critical thinking skills.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was observed in all lessons to support learning, primarily through the use of PowerPoint presentations. In one instance, the use of an engaging video-clip enhanced student engagement and benefited the work in hand. Teachers should expand their use of ICT to include video-clips, news items and other more creative resources.
- All teachers endeavoured to maintain a good balance between instruction and student activity through the use of pair or group work. While it was effective in some lessons in encouraging active learning, there were other lessons where students did not engage with each other. In these instances, teachers should review the purpose of the activity as to whether the task supports collaborative and independent work.
- There was one lesson where the benefits of a good learning task remained unfulfilled as students refused to volunteer for active involvement in the activity. In such instances, teachers should establish that students are not afforded opportunities to opt out and the task is assigned for completion in pairs or groups.
- Some of the lessons involved revision, which was appropriate to the class group and for the time of year. Of particular note in one lesson was the manner in which students were guided in terms of answering an examination-style question and where the question was

an outcome of the learning rather than dictating it. This practice should be extended to all class groups preparing for examinations.

- In some of the lessons observed teachers implicitly encouraged students to make their own notes from the information recorded. It is recommended that this good practice be made more explicit and extended to all lessons and that note making be encouraged above note-taking.
- Homework was assigned and corrected with formative comments included in some instances to support student progress. Due attention to formative assessment is recommended in all lessons. Teachers should also consider the use of a CSPE journal to record learning arising from their classwork and homework assignments.
- Students were very well behaved throughout and in most instances engaged well with the work of the lesson. Many of their answers indicated good levels of learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good whole-school provision for CSPE in the allocation of time and the provision of resources.
- School management should endeavour to assign CSPE teachers to the same class group for another subject. This would facilitate more regular contact with the students and the completion of action projects.
- Classrooms are teacher-based and there were a number of CSPE-related posters on the walls. Teachers should consider the creation of CSPE notice board in a common area for the display of local and national news of relevance to the subject. Photographs of public figures could also be shown as appropriate so that students may recognise them for examination purposes.
- It is recommended that a core CSPE team be established in order to ensure continuity and to support teachers new to the subject. While some teachers currently delivering the subject have availed of CSPE in-service and this is commended, opportunities should now be afforded to them to disseminate their learning to all members of staff involved in teaching the subject.
- Visits to support the completion of action projects and the use of guest speakers are facilitated. However, a whole school policy setting out protocols for guest speakers in the school should be developed. Students over the years have also engaged in a number of significant fundraising activities as part of their action projects.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department meetings have taken place although somewhat sporadically over recent years and minutes have been recorded. School management should endeavour to facilitate more regular meetings of the CSPE department. This is of particular importance for facilitating the sharing of good practice given concerns highlighted in the minutes about student outcomes in the certificate examinations.
- The subject plan for CSPE is well developed setting out the school context and including good schemes of work for each year group. These schemes set out the concepts to be taught, teaching and learning strategies, resources and activities which can be linked to

other subjects and assessment protocols. Attention to the incorporation of literacy and numeracy skills has also been included and this is welcomed.

- To further enhance this very good work, teachers should consider a review of progress on the completion of each concept, highlighting the strategies which worked best and those which were less effective. This would inform ongoing improvement in the delivery of CSPE as a subject.
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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 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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Ramsgrange Community School welcomes the CSPE subject Inspection Report for its commendation of the high standard of the teaching of CSPE within our school.

We are particularly pleased with the acknowledgment of the Inspectorate of:

The overall very good standard of teaching observed

The well-structured nature of the lessons and the commendation that the range of methodologies used were done so to good effect

The positive promotion of active learning strategies including the creative use of ICT and the purposeful use of pair work

The recognition of good practice in relation to note taking

The integration in an incremental manner of revision and examination practices

The good work done in relation to subject planning for CSPE

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

The management and staff of Ramsgrange Community School are fully committed to the continuing development of the school. Following a review of the recommendations given in the CSPE subject inspection report, which are viewed by management as a means of building on our strengths as outlined and addressing areas for further development, many have already been implemented while others are in the process of implementation.