

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Religious Education
REPORT**

**Coláiste Pobail Setanta
Phibblestown, Clonee, Dublin 15
Roll number: 76098W**

Date of inspection: 15 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 RELIGIOUS EDUCATION**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	14, 15 November 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Meeting with the subject coordinators• 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

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching was very good in all of the lessons observed, with many examples of excellent practice.
- The quality of students' learning was also very good in all of the lessons.
- The quality of whole-school provision for Religious Education (RE) is excellent.
- The school's RE department is strong, and the teachers are hard-working, professional and committed.
- Subject planning and individual teachers' planning was of a very high standard.
- The strong whole-school focus on Assessment for Learning (AfL) supports the teaching and learning of RE.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The RE department should continue to explore the potential of information and communication technology (ICT) and especially the interactive white board.
 - The RE department should continue to develop the practice of using higher-order questioning with a view to deepening students' understanding of, and reflection on, the topics being studied.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Pobail Setanta is a co-educational, non-designated post-primary school under the aegis of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Founded in 2008, Coláiste Pobail Setanta serves the new and developing area of Dublin 15.

Enrolment in the current school year stands at 580 students. In addition to Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, the school offers Transition Year (TY) on an optional basis.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- All lessons observed during the evaluation were characterised by very high quality teaching, with many examples of excellent practice. A notable feature of all lessons was the prominence of AfL strategies in setting clear learning objectives, sharing them with the students and assessing their attainment in the course of the lesson.
- Lessons were very well prepared, and a good range of appropriate resources was used. Students' attention was always maintained, and the content of lessons was in all cases appropriate and interesting. Different learning styles were catered for, by use of features such as mind maps and picture boards.
- In all lessons there was a strong focus on developing students' mastery of key words and subject-specific concepts. Some good examples of strategies to develop students' literacy skills were also noted.
- Clear exposition, explanation and presentation of new material were features of all lessons. There was a good variety of learning activities, and use was made of pair work and group work as appropriate.
- Classroom management was in all cases highly effective, and students responded well to established routines. Pace and time management was also very good. For example, time was left to summarise the lesson content and to check the attainment of learning objectives.
- A focus of whole-school development for improving teaching and learning is questioning strategies, and particularly the use of higher-order questions. Some very effective questioning was observed during the evaluation, and the RE department is encouraged to continue to develop and extend the use of higher order questioning with a view to deepening students' understanding of, and reflection on, the topics being studied.
- The quality of students' learning was very good in all lessons: students demonstrated very good knowledge of the topics being studied and very good understanding of the key concepts involved
- The students are well organised and purposeful in their work. The content and presentation of the written work in their copybooks is very good, and their hardback notebooks provide evidence of progress through the syllabus.
- The students' research skills are developed by the careful preparation of journal work for the certificate examinations. Achievement in the Junior Certificate examination is very good, and almost all students take Higher Level.
- There is a strong culture of assessment for learning in the school: assessment is an integral part of teaching and learning. The RE department plans well for regular assessment, uses a variety of assessment modes and encourages students' self-assessment

and peer assessment. For example, students use checklists to evaluate the presentation and content of their own written work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support is excellent: Religious Education enjoys strong support from school management, which values the contribution the subject makes to the students' holistic development.
- Curricular provision is optimal. All students in the school follow the Department of Education and Skills RE syllabus in junior cycle and have the option of continuing with the subject to Leaving Certificate level. A ten-week modular RE programme for TY has been developed. Students in fifth year who are not taking curricular RE participate in the SPHERE programme, which includes elements of RE and of Social, Personal and Health Education (SPHE).
- Timetabled allocation for RE is very good: in junior cycle three periods per week, in senior cycle five periods for curricular RE and three for SPHERE.
- There are five RE teachers, all of whom are fully qualified and registered with the Teaching Council. Together they constitute a strong, compact subject department. They are professional and hard-working, enthusiastic for their subject and keen to develop and promote it in the school. They engage with continuing professional development (CPD), and a record of this engagement is kept. In addition, they benefit from significant whole-school CPD.
- Resources for the teaching of RE are very good. Teachers have their own classrooms, with data projectors and interactive whiteboards. The RE teachers have developed an attractive, comfortable quiet room, the "Seomra Suaimhneas". There is also an RE resource room for storing materials, and electronic teaching resources are shared on the school's S-drive. The RE department should continue to explore the potential of ICT and especially the interactive white board.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is a very good whole-school approach to planning in Coláiste Pobail Setanta, and this is reflected in the very high standard of subject planning in RE.
- Four formal collaborative planning meetings are held each year, and very good minutes of these meetings are kept. There are two subject coordinators, one for junior cycle and one for senior cycle, and the roles are rotated among department members.
- The minutes and planning documents show that there is a reflective approach to subject planning: plans are reviewed annually and revised as necessary. The documents also show an awareness of the developmental challenges facing the department and the steps that need to be taken to meet those challenges.
- The subject plan is comprehensive and matches the syllabus to the school's needs. For example, in junior cycle, Sections A, B and C are, commendably, all taught, in line with the school's non-designated status and the multi-denominational nature of the student population. The schemes of work are set out in differentiated learning outcomes for "all", "most" or "some" students.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the 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 February 2013.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the report and its very positive findings.

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 Board is happy to report that staff have already taken steps to implement both recommendations.