



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Computer Science and Digital Subjects REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Coláiste Pobail Setanta
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Colaiste Pobail Setanta Phibblestown Clonee
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	76098W
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	22/01/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	26/05/2025

What is a subject inspection?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Computer Science and Digital Subjects under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

The board of management of the school 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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	22/01/2025
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons• Review of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Coláiste Pobail Setanta is a co-educational post-primary school operating under the auspices of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education & Training Board (DDLETB). Enrolment at the time of the evaluation was 1065. The school offered the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school had a special class, known as *Croí*.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- There was good quality teaching and learning observed in the lessons; all lessons were well-prepared, and teachers included a variety of resources and approaches to keep the learning interesting.
- Teachers in all lessons demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm for the subject and were very affirming of students' efforts.
- Assessment was good; the approaches used by teachers to give feedback to students was of a high quality. There was, however, inconsistent use of this practice.
- The quality of whole-school support and provision for the subjects was very good and there were excellent supports for information and communications technology (ICT) at school level.
- Planning and preparation was very good; the subject team had developed well-structured units of learning and had accumulated a large variety of supporting resources.

Recommendations

- There was scope to improve the questioning strategies in a majority of lessons. To help students to engage with critical thinking throughout lessons and to assess learning at the conclusion of lessons, teachers should extend the frequency of questions and the range of questioning strategies employed.
- To increase students' responsibility for their own learning during lessons and for teachers to better meet the range of needs and abilities in lessons, teachers should encourage students to access supporting materials on the schools' digital platform so they can move on with their own learning as they need.
- Students would have benefited, in the majority of lessons, to have a greater amount of time to be actively engaged in tasks and to reflect on their learning. Teachers should plan lessons to achieve a better balance between teacher-led phases and student-centred activities.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good.
- Teachers shared learning intentions orally or visually at the beginning of most lessons. This was most effective in a few lessons, when students had opportunities to discuss the learning intentions and relate them to prior learning. In most lessons, learning was well-sequenced and students were able to make good progress. To help students to reflect on their learning and to help teachers assess the quality of learning in the conclusion of lessons, teachers should embed discussion and reflection into the lesson structures and the digital teaching materials.
- Teachers in all lessons demonstrated a high level of enthusiasm for the subjects and were very affirming of students' efforts.
- Students who participated in the focus groups reported very positively on their experiences in lessons. They said that they enjoyed the learning, particularly when they worked on projects, such as coding with electronics and sensors, when there were discussions or when they worked collaboratively in groups.
- All lessons had appropriately selected resources, such as slides, videos and microcomputers, which provided good scaffolding to the teaching and learning. Teachers explained most concepts well using interesting examples, scenarios as well as physical props such as computer components. These resources added a realism and context to support students' understanding.
- Teachers explained students' tasks very effectively in half of the lessons observed, particularly when they focused more on demonstration rather than description, as this encouraged better student interaction. In a few lessons, students shared their examples on the projector with the class, providing a valuable opportunity to take greater ownership and responsibility for their learning. In the majority of lessons, there was an emphasis of a teacher-led approach. In a small number of lessons, a very good balance of time towards students completing activities had been achieved. Students in these instances were meaningfully active and engaged in their tasks.
- During activities, teachers monitored student activity well and responded quickly and effectively, where students required assistance. In discussions with students, they said that they greatly valued when there was more time dedicated towards activities. This offered them time to seek support when they needed it, enabling them then to participate to a greater extent in the lesson.
- As part of the school's own self-evaluation process, they focused on students setting their own learning targets. In a few lessons, teachers planned opportunities for students to complete self-reflection tasks. A good teacher-designed resource called a progress log was used by students to complete this reflection task and to record their learning.
- Students demonstrated a very high level of proficiency in the use of the digital platform. At senior cycle, in particular, students accessed resources with ease, which supported students to understand how to proceed in their set tasks. Students described that this was a very effective way for teachers to share and record extension tasks. In a majority of lessons, there was scope to provide students with additional challenges and this practice, if shared across the department, would meet the needs of a greater number of students.
- In a few lessons, teachers used excellent questioning strategies to encourage students to think critically, reflect on their learning, and make connections to other subjects. Teachers in these instances used questioning to appropriately challenge students. This practice should be shared and embedded across lessons, as there was considerable scope to improve this practice in a majority of lessons.
- There was inconsistency in the quality of formative feedback used in lessons. In a few lessons, students were encouraged to reflect on feedback of previous projects when beginning new projects. This was very good practice and further supported the schools

own focus on reflection and in students setting their own targets. With this in mind, the subject department should agree approaches to ensure that all students are facilitated to identify how to improve their work with regular formative feedback. When appropriate, students should also be encouraged to note oral feedback on their own work.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good.
- Students in junior cycle selected a combination subject, which encompassed the short courses in Digital Media Literacy and Coding. Students in *Croí* participated in the level two learning programme (L2LP), Coding. Students in LCA had very good access to Digital Subjects, with Introduction to information and communications technology (ICT), in addition to the ICT vocational specialism. Computer Science was a popular choice for senior cycle students with two classes running in fifth and sixth year.
- Very good facilities supported the provision of these subjects. The rooms were well-equipped, with a variety of resources available to support digital projects. All students used digital devices, which were used seamlessly as part of the lessons. The school had introduced a module of digital wellbeing in first year to support the development of key digital skills and better utilisation of digital devices across all subjects. The school used surveys with teachers and students to measure its success and were using the findings to inform the development of the module. This practice was commended.
- Supporting the development of digital learning was given a high priority in the school and excellent support systems were in place to facilitate this. Namely, two ICT coordinators, with the support from the DDLETB, maintained the infrastructure. The school had a digital team who were tasked with supporting the improvement of the schools' digital plan and the design of the digital wellbeing module. Students too were afforded leadership opportunities taking on roles in a digital leaders programme.
- Management encouraged teachers to take part in teacher professional learning (TPL), providing time and support, where relevant. The subject team recorded, in the minutes of meetings, evidence of a variety of recent TPL, with an expanding number of team members qualified to teach Computer Science. Relevant TPL was shared at staff meetings.
- A very good digital learning plan was in place. Effective specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets were set, with clear plans and focuses for improvement. Strengths of staff and students were identified, which included use of the digital platform. Focus for improvement included digital skill development for first-year students and expanding staff expertise into areas such as artificial intelligence (AI).
- Students participated actively in school and national competitions. The subject team supported students very well with after-school drop-in support clinics. The school worked closely with a technology organisation and students had opportunities to visit the organisation on-site.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of preparation and planning was very good.
- Teachers were well-prepared for individual lessons and there was very good evidence of collaboration between team members.
- Lesson structures and associated resources were highly organised at senior cycle on the digital platform. A few of the lesson plans reviewed on the platform were of exemplary quality. These plans carefully outlined clear success criteria, differentiated tasks and a wide diversity of resources to support students learning. It would be valuable to extend these practices into more lesson plans.
- At junior cycle, well-developed units of learning included clear learning intentions, learning strategies and outlines for student activities. These plans expanded effectively

on the specification outcomes and built digital skills, which promoted critical thinking and included stimuli students would find interesting. Students noted, during the inspection, how they valued the opportunities they got to engage with problem-solving tasks and enjoyed the freedom to connect the course with their personal interests. Teachers recorded useful strategies to facilitate differentiation and variety in the teaching and learning approaches in the schemes of work. As the units of learning spanned considerable time periods, the department should divide the units and add additional detail, to ensure that high quality strategies are used in every lesson.

- A template provided by the senior leadership team was used to record minutes of meetings. Of the minutes reviewed they indicated that the subject team were reflective. In particular, department discussions were improvement-focused and revisions were made to planning, as needed, to meet changing needs of students. Commendably, teaching and learning was discussed in meetings and a few of the agreed department actions, were observed being transacted in lessons. To aid teachers in following through with these agreed strategies, the subject team should integrate them into the plans on the digital platform and the schemes of work.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal/deputy principals at the conclusion of the evaluation.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of Coláiste Pobail
Setanta about their learning in
Computer Science and Digital
Subjects.

Date of inspection: 22/01/2025

What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in Computer Science and Digital Subjects.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



- Teachers were enthusiastic and always encouraged students to do their best.
- There were excellent supports for digital technologies in the school.
- The subject team had developed high-quality plans and a large variety of resources to help teaching and learning.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Computer Science and Digital Subjects?



- Teachers should ask students more questions that allow them to think critically and reflect more on their learning. They should do this by using different types of questions and approaches when asking questions.
- Students should be encouraged to access materials on the digital platform so that they can move on with the learning activity without waiting for help.
- Teachers should plan lessons so that students have more time to work on the tasks and take part in reflection activities.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
Special thanks to the students who participated in the focus group.

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	Provision that is very good is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

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 accepts and welcomes the report.

The board accepts and appreciates the findings and recommendations and will support the leadership and teachers of Coláiste Pobail Setanta to work on the recommendations and achieve their goals across all subjects.

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

Coláiste Pobail Setanta fully accepts the findings and recommendations of the subject inspections.

As a school we will fully engage with the inspection report and take all the necessary steps to meet the recommendation across all subjects in the academic year 2025-26.

All teachers will engage with the recommendations and these will be reflected in subject planning and lesson delivery.

Coláiste Pobail Setanta welcomes this opportunity to engage in reflection and planning.