An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Subject Inspection: Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE)
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Holy Child Community School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Pearse St Sallynoggin Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91330K
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	02/05/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	08/10/2025

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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE) 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) or Bí Cineálta (2024) 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.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	02/05/2025
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and deputy principal

School context

Holy Child Community School is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust, with an enrolment of 277 students at the time of the evaluation. The school offers the Junior Cycle (JC), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion. All students at Junior Cycle study CSPE.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall.
- Student behaviour was excellent throughout the evaluation and conducive to wellbeing.
- Subject provision and whole school support was very good.
- CSPE had a high profile within the school and was valued as a core component of the wellbeing programme.
- A wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities supported learning in CSPE.
- Planning was very good overall with a few areas for development.

Recommendations

- All teachers should view themselves as teachers of literacy, and implement the school's agreed literacy strategies in lessons to support students in attaining a good level of general vocabulary.
- Teachers should explore ways to provide guidance to students on how to improve their work.
- When reviewing the subject plan, teachers should consider integrating planning across the three strands: *Rights and Responsibilities*, *Global Citizenship*, and *Exploring Democracy* to support deeper student learning across the three years of Junior Cycle.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- Behaviour across all lessons observed was consistently very good, and lessons were marked by a positive, respectful classroom atmosphere. Students worked well together and showed a strong willingness to collaborate and share ideas.
- Lessons were well structured, and teachers demonstrated skill in managing transitions and maintaining lesson pace.
- In most of the lessons observed, students experienced engaging and enjoyable learning environments. A variety of active methodologies was used effectively, including group tasks, walking debates, and visual learning activities such as brand recognition activity. These approaches contributed to a high level of student interest and participation. In one lesson, there was an imbalance between teacher input and student participation. The good practice observed where students were provided with regular opportunities to learn collaboratively should be extended to all lessons.
- Questioning strategies by teachers were primarily whole-class in nature, this frequently led to the same students responding, which limited the engagement of others. In some lessons, teachers encouraged further engagement through repetition and redirection of questions; this was good practice. It would be beneficial for teachers to explore other questioning techniques that encourage broader student involvement, and use strategies such as *Think-Pair-Share*.
- The promotion of literacy as a gateway skill had been a recent DEIS focus in the school. Attention to literacy in the lessons observed varied. Some good examples of development of oral literacy were observed, however, there was scope to further support students' understanding by explicitly teaching new vocabulary, displaying key words, and reinforcing correct spelling and usage. Overall, there was a need for further development of key words in lessons across the three tiers of literacy: basic everyday words, high-utility academic words used across subjects, and subject-specific terms. All teachers should view themselves as teachers of literacy, and implement the school's agreed literacy strategies in lessons to support students in attaining a good level of general vocabulary.
- It was positive that the schools recent focus on differentiation strategies was observed in lessons. Best practice was seen in one lesson where differentiated worksheets were provided for students, ensuring their individual learning needs were met thereby fostering an inclusive learning environment. This was good practice and should be extended.
- Students did not have copybooks for CSPE. Teachers provided handouts for classroom-based activities. Teachers should consider how students record their progress in learning, for example, students could maintain a reflective journal of learning in CSPE.
- Students had completed their CSPE action projects, which reflected genuine learning and active citizenship. These projects were a source of pride and satisfaction for students in the focus group. While students were able to discuss their action projects enthusiastically, many had yet to receive feedback on their assignments. Where teachers provided feedback to students, it was generally affirming and supportive. However, there was scope to provide guidance for improvement with formative strategies such as *two stars and a wish*, and by co-developing success criteria with students—particularly given the school's broader DEIS focus on this area.
- Classrooms contained desks that were laid out in rows. This was not ideal for collaborative learning. Teachers should consider arranging the learning space in a way that better supports student-to-student interaction and active student engagement.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- Whole-school support for CSPE was very good. The subject had a high profile within the school and was valued as a core component of the wellbeing programme. School leadership clearly prioritised the subject and deployed teachers thoughtfully. Teachers volunteered to teach CSPE, and new teachers to the subject embraced the opportunity with enthusiasm. One teacher, new to the subject, expressed genuine enjoyment and an eagerness to continue teaching it in future years.
- Teachers new to the school reported that there was strong support for teacher professional development, particularly through the Droichead process, with mentors and colleagues offering significant support. Initiatives such as a World Café session, which featured staff leading on differentiation across various subjects, was reported to have been very successful.
- Timetabling for CSPE was appropriate and aligned with the Junior Cycle Wellbeing Guidelines, with students receiving 110 hours over three years.
- The CSPE department made meaningful contributions to whole-school life through involvement in initiatives such as International Week, promoting active citizenship and inclusion.
- Reporting practices were strong. Teachers used comment-based reports that often included references to topics studied, skills developed, and action projects completed. In the best examples, comments provided meaningful suggestions for improvement. Extending this strong practice across all reports could further enhance parental understanding of the subject's value and reinforce the educational importance of CSPE.
- Students spoke very positively about their experience of CSPE. In the focus group, they described the subject as reflective, discussion-based, and less pressurised than other subjects—attributes which they appreciated. They valued the chance to work with their peers and particularly enjoyed completing action projects. These projects provided a real sense of achievement and gave students opportunities to connect their learning with real-world issues.
- A wide variety of co-curricular and extracurricular activities supported learning in CSPE. The Student Council was highly active; leading numerous initiatives including whole-school bingo, inter-year group team bonding, and 'Actions and Words Week'.The school also engaged in the Amber Flag campaign and participated in the 'Take One' sustainability programme.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation for CSPE was very good overall, with a few areas for development.
- Teachers were well-organised and made effective use of a variety of resources, including handouts, presentations, and digital content. Collaborative planning supported a consistent approach to teaching CSPE.
- There was strong collaboration among teachers. Formal meetings took place regularly, with minutes maintained. Informal sharing of ideas and resources was a clear feature of the department's culture. Teachers new to the subject were well supported by their colleagues and quickly integrated into the department.
- Departmental schemes were comprehensive and clearly laid out, detailing topics, learning outcomes, and methodologies for each term. There was a coherent structure in place, however, delivery of the curriculum tended to follow the textbook in a linear fashion. When reviewing the subject plan teachers should consider integrating planning across the three strands: *Rights and Responsibilities*, *Global Citizenship*, and *Exploring Democracy* to support deeper student learning across the three years of junior cycle. Many of the learning outcomes are interrelated across the strands and a non-linear approach to planning is advised so that students can link learning.

- In previous years, CSPE planning documentation included strategies for integrating literacy strategies to support students' vocabulary and comprehension; this was good practice and should be reintroduced into the current subject plan. It is suggested that learning in CSPE could be linked to events in the school calendar, such as elections, awareness weeks, and other events, which would bring a timely and relevant dimension to CSPE lessons.

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

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

For the students of Holy Child Community School about their learning in Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE)

Date of inspection:
02/05/2025

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 Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE).

What were the main findings of the inspection?



- Teachers did a good job helping students learn.
- Students behaved really well, which helped everyone feel happy and safe.
- CSPE was an important subject in the school and helped students learn about the world.
- There were many activities outside the classroom that helped students understand what they were learning in CSPE.
- Planning by teachers was very good, with just a few things that could be improved..

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE)?



- Teachers should help students get better at reading and using everyday words. They should use the school's literacy tips in their lessons to help with this.
- When teachers are planning they should try to connect the topics — Rights and Responsibilities, Global Citizenship, and Exploring Democracy — to help students can understand them better over the three years of Junior Cycle.

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