



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Follow-through inspection

on progress made by the school since the **Subject Inspection in Science and Biology** carried out in March 2024

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Firhouse Community College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Firhouse Road Dublin 24
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	70140L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	27/11/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	11/02/2026

Follow-Through Inspection

Follow-Through inspections evaluate the progress a school has made on implementing recommendations made in an earlier inspection. During a Follow-Through inspection, inspectors may also advise the school on what other actions they can take to fully implement these recommendations.

This inspection followed up on the progress the school made in implementing the main recommendations in the inspection carried out in March 2024: Subject Inspection in Science and Biology. Published school reports can be accessed [here](#).

How to read this report

The first part of the report describes what the inspector did during this Follow-Through inspection.

The main section of the report describes the progress the school has made in implementing each of the main recommendations made in the original inspection. Inspectors use one of the following terms in describing this progress: very good, good, partial or no progress. These terms are explained on the last page of the report.

The report then briefly describes the process school leaders used to implement the recommendations. School leaders includes the principal, the deputy principal and assistant principals. It also includes teachers with posts of responsibility and any member of the school community who has undertaken roles related to the school's priorities.

The report concludes with advice to help the school fully implement the recommendations made in the original inspection, where such advice has been provided to the school.

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>Bí Cineálta</i>
1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. <i>Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.</i> 2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment. 3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.	1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, <i>it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.</i> 2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils. 3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>

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

The following activities took place during the Follow-Through inspection:

- Meeting with the senior leadership team
- Interview with subject co-ordinators
- Review of school documentation and records, and students' work
- Observation of teaching and learning
- Interaction/meeting with students

Findings on progress made on recommendations

Features of in-class assessment required improvement. Teachers should assess all students during lessons and provide formative feedback on their work.

Good Progress

Almost all of the science department was providing written feedback to students. In one lesson, students' copybooks contained a huge amount of written affirmative and corrective feedback. In another lesson, the copybooks sampled had only the teacher's signature. In other copybooks sampled, there were multiple examples of the use of a success criteria stickers used to indicate what the student had done well and what was needed to enhance the students work. In the most effective examples, students used this feedback to improve their work.

During the lessons observed, a small sample of students were asked progress questions. This approach would have been enhanced through the strategic use of mini whiteboards and a key progress question. A few copybooks recorded details of student engagement in whole-class Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies and this was commendable.

To ensure consistency of student experience, all teachers should implement the most effective AfL practices. Science and biology teachers should also ensure feedback leads to progress in student learning.

Teachers should provide further opportunities for independent learning. Students had not cultivated the ability to autonomously investigate in Science. Teachers should facilitate students to gradually build the necessary skills of scientific inquiry over the three years of junior cycle.

Good Progress

The co-ordinating teachers reported improvement in the department's approach to developing students' abilities to investigate in Science. They provided examples of how and when students are given opportunities to engage in student directed design of investigations. The department had a very useful action plan that noted an approach to gradually building the necessary skills of scientific inquiry.

There was scope for teachers to take greater account of the action verbs in learning outcomes. This approach would ensure that the most appropriate times are chosen for students to develop the necessary skills. For example, the "*investigate*" and "*conduct*" action verbs indicate times where students should engage in more creative decision making during investigations.

There were very few student records of investigation and research tasks available to view during the evaluation. The subject department should review and streamline their current approach to maintaining these important records.

A recent health and safety risk analysis for the laboratories had not been completed. Senior management should expedite the completion of these, and they should be carried out annually going forward.

Very Good Progress

Safety risk analysis was completed recently for the laboratories.

As the science classroom-based assessment (CBA) was carried out in addition to the house exams last year. Senior management should lead a review of the assessment arrangements and should focus on the need to promote the importance of the CBA process.

Good Progress

The school took appropriate action to promote the importance of the CBA and this has led to improvements in this regard. Since the subject inspection, the school enhanced the prominence of the CBAs which was very positive. Senior leadership reported that they promoted the CBA using a number of approaches that included junior cycle students receiving a talk from a group of fifth-year mentor students about the skills needed to complete the CBA. They further explained how they presented awards and rewards to students based on their performance in their CBAs. Parents and guardians were invited to attend an information night about the CBAs to support their understanding of their importance. Each students' science CBA was used to enter SciFest competition which provides a wonderful opportunity for students to celebrate and present their work.

Further consideration is necessary with regard to the need for CBAs to substitute for house examinations to ensure the CBA has equal status to written formal exams.

Science teachers should plan units of learning that link learning outcomes from across the specification, including the 'Nature of Science' strand. The units also require clarity around the intended learning and the related assessments.

Very Good Progress

The science team had formed units learning that consisted of learning outcomes from across the contextual strands and included aspects of *Nature of Science* in these units. Very specific intended learning and the related assessments were listed in the planning documents which is highly effective practice.

The biology teachers should now apply these highly effective approaches to planning for the recently redeveloped specifications. It would be very beneficial to gather ideas for high quality learning activities to achieve the intended learning for the new courses and ways to assess skill development.

The process of implementing the recommendations

A series of meetings were held to review and discuss the recommendations from the inspection report. Plans were formulated to implement the recommendations including an action plan. A whole-school approach to enhancing feedback to students was implemented. Teachers from the science department joined a team of teachers who had responsibility for promoting effective practices. Regular professional sharing opportunities were scheduled to facilitate this professional learning.

Recommendations

- To ensure consistency of student experience, all teachers should implement the most effective AfL practices. Science and biology teachers should also ensure feedback leads to progress in student learning.
- The subject departments should review and streamline their current approach to maintaining investigation and research records.
- Further consideration is necessary with regard to the need for the CBA to substitute for house examinations to ensure the CBA has equal status to written formal exams.
- The biology teachers should now use the highly effective approaches taken to plan for junior cycle and apply them to planning for newly redeveloped specifications for senior cycle.

The Quality Continuum for progress made on implementing the recommendations

Very good progress indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the recommendation. The action has fully achieved or will achieve the required outcome.

Good progress indicates that appropriate action has been taken to address the recommendation. Substantial improvement has occurred, although further progress is necessary.

Partial progress indicates that some appropriate action has been taken to address the recommendation. Some improvement has occurred, but considerable further progress is necessary.

No progress indicates that no action has been taken. The original recommendation remains to be addressed.

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 Firhouse Community College welcomes the Follow Through Subject Inspection report.

It acknowledges the positive findings of the report, in relation to addressing the recommendations or the earlier inspection and in particular the recognition of the good progress made in each of the five areas highlighted.

We note the recognition of the progress made by the Science teachers in providing written feedback to the students and in particular the use of affirmative and corrective feedback. We acknowledge the finding that the Science department have a 'very useful action plan' in relation to providing further opportunities for independent learning.

We note also the acknowledgment that the health and safety risk analysis has been carried out for the labs and we aim to ensure that this is conducted annually, going forward.

We appreciate that the actions taken to promote the importance of the CBAs has been recognised.

We are also pleased with the finding that 'very good progress' has been made in addressing the recommendation in relation to the units of learning

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 of Management along with the senior management team will support the science department in addressing the recommendations of this report.

We will take a whole school approach to promoting effective AFL practices.

The science teachers will take on board your recommendation in relation investigation and research records.

The status of CBAs and the balance with inhouse exams will be considered and the recommendation in relation to planning at senior cycle will be followed