



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Religious Education (RE) Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Louis High School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Charleville Road Rathmines Dublin 6
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60890C
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	30/04/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	18/09/2024

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 Religious Education 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.

2. 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.

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Subject inspection

Date of inspection	30/04/2024
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including a focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Louis High School is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Trust, with a current enrolment of 646 girls. The school provides the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). Department of Education approved Religious Education (RE) is a core subject at Junior Cycle for all students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with some excellent practice observed in lessons.
- Assessment practice was good with some examples of highly effective practice, there was scope to improve and increase developmental written formative feedback to ensure all students reach their learning potential.
- Digital learning technologies (DLT) were used effectively in the majority of lessons and enhanced the learning experience while supporting high levels of motivation and independent learning.
- Whole school provision and support for RE was very good, with excellent practice in relation to teacher professional learning (TPL).
- Overall, planning was good with improvement needed in a few areas to achieve a very good standard.
- The RE department was supporting school improvement to a very high standard through exemplary engagement levels with whole-school initiatives.

Recommendations

- Teachers, in consultation with students, should collectively develop an effective approach to providing developmental written feedback to students on their work.
- The RE department should review and update the Junior Cycle units of learning for all year groups.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good, lessons ranged from good to very good, with some excellent practice observed in lessons.
- Assessment practice was good overall with some examples of highly effective practice. While effective oral formative assessment practices were evident in most lessons, there was scope for improvement in the level and quality of developmental written formative feedback on students' work across the department.
- Teachers displayed very good subject knowledge and lessons were characterised by respectful interactions and a positive and inclusive learning environment. This was affirmed by students during the focus group meeting.
- Teachers demonstrated competence and proficiency in the skills and knowledge of RE. Creative stimuli were used to motivate students and increase participation levels. Teachers modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning and created an environment conducive to learning.
- Teachers routinely shared the learning intentions at the start of lessons. Where the learning intention was explicit, this facilitated a review of the lesson at its conclusion, allowing students and teachers to reflect on whether the learning intentions had been achieved. In some instances, teachers shared success criteria with students so that they could assess their own learning through self-assessment.
- Questioning techniques were effective overall, with the potential to develop questioning skills in a minority of lessons to stretch the learning and develop critical thinking skills.
- Collaborative learning was used effectively in all lessons, this supported high levels of student engagement and participation, while encouraging authentic student voice.
- All students in the school have access to a digital device and teachers have created online learning platforms for all class groups. This was highlighted as a key strength in the student focus group discussions. Students reported this provides access to shared resources and assigned homework tasks enhancing the learning experience for all.
- Very good practice was evident in some lessons when teachers made learning relevant for students by linking new learning to previous learning and daily life. In a minority of lessons there was scope to contextualise the lesson content to students' lives.
- Overall, students were confident learners and they displayed very good levels of interest in learning and RE topics such as rituals and moral dilemmas. In one very good lesson, music and DLT were used to encourage creative thinking and develop reflective and critical thinking skills.
- Differentiated learning was achieved mainly through group work, targeted questioning, and differentiated worksheets. In order to differentiate upwards, teachers should provide students with challenging extension tasks to ensure that all students reach their learning potential and experience success as learners while promoting the key skills of RE, such as critical thinking.
- Learner outcomes were best when students demonstrated high levels of interest. Some reflective tasks were built into lessons, for example, students reflected on moral issues and applied different religious and non-religious perspectives. The RE team should continue to develop this highly effective practice.
- In most lessons, teachers prepared interesting and engaging resources to support the learning intentions, for example, video clips with a targeted learning focus. In the most effective lessons, students took responsibility for their own learning by using the resources provided, including digital technologies.
- During discussions in a focus group, students spoke positively about their experience

of RE. Students noted that they particularly enjoyed when collaborative learning approaches were used in lessons to enhance shared learning experiences. Students emphasised that they enjoyed Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) and learning about different world religions and non-religious world views in RE lessons.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for RE was very good and the timetabling for Junior Cycle RE is in line with the Department of Education requirements.
- It was positive that the school was implementing a whole-school assessment policy and were replacing some RE in-house examinations with CBAs.
- Teachers showed commitment and enthusiasm for extending students' learning experiences in RE through a range of extra-curricular activities, such as trips to places of religious significance.
- The RE team was working closely with the Additional Educational Needs (AEN) department to ensure that all students are supported and encouraged in their learning.
- The school participates in the School Inclusion Model (SIM) project and highly commendable practice was in place to support inclusion in the RE department in relation to English as an Additional Language through the use of digital technology supports.
- Very good deployment practice was evident and there was excellent engagement in teacher professional learning (TPL) within the RE department, fostered by management, that enriched teachers' practice and students' learning. This exemplary practice was supporting development and improvement in the RE department and across the school for example, through the Vocabulary Enrichment Programme
- Commendably, members of the RE team have shared their expertise with teachers from other schools, for example through online forums and the support services.

3. Planning and preparation

- Planning and preparation was good overall. Teachers designed and prepared a sequence of learning tasks and activities suitable for the specific learning intentions of the lessons.
- The RE subject plans reviewed at the time of inspection adopted a unit of learning approach. However, the plans were overly reliant on the structure of the textbook and should be reviewed and updated.
- The quality of individual teacher reflection on teaching and learning practice was a significant strength observed during the evaluation.
- Student outcomes in the Junior Cycle examinations were reviewed annually, with an analysis of attainment trends. Yearly targets were set and the RE team reflected on achievement and areas for improvement, this was very good practice.
- The RE team met regularly both informally and formally to share ideas and resources. In addition, the team worked collaboratively online to create common assessments and to share good practice.
- Members of the RE department were supporting school improvement in various ways, including involvement in initiatives at school and national level, for example, the development of creative and engaging resources. This excellent practice is highly commendable.

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



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of St Louis High School about their learning in Religious Education

30/04/2024

What kind of inspection did your school have?



Recently, an inspector called to your school to carry out a subject inspection. The inspector visited some classes and had a talk with the principal and teachers. They also met with a focus group of students who study Religious Education. The inspector wanted to hear what the focus group of students had to say about their learning experience in that subject.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



The inspector saw many things during the inspection. The main findings were:

- Teaching and learning was very good, with some excellent practice observed.
- Assessment practices were good overall with some highly effective practice; however, students would benefit from more written feedback on their work to ensure they reach their potential as learners.
- Digital Technology was used very well in lessons, and this supported high levels of motivation and independent learning.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Religious Education?



- Teachers should consult with students about ways to develop and increase written formative feedback on their work.
- The RE department should revise and update units of learning.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to the students who participated in the focus
group.**

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

St Louis High School welcomes the affirmation given to students, teachers of the RE Department and senior management.

The BOM pays tribute to the RE Department, senior management, and students for contributing so much to the evaluation's positive findings. The recognition of the student voice is a very positive addition to these inspection reports and the BOM is particularly delighted to read that the effective use of collaborative learning supported high levels of student engagement and participation and encouraged authentic student voice. The BOM is also delighted to note that students from the focus group meeting affirmed the finding that their teachers displayed a very good subject knowledge and lessons were characterised by respectful interactions and a positive and inclusive learning environment. The BOM is affirmed to read that students spoke positively about their experience of RE and that the student focus group reported that another key strength was that the use of digital technology and online learning platforms enhanced their learning experience.

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

The DE Inspectorate's recognition of the following aspects is particularly appreciated, and the school will endeavour to further develop the recommendations as articulated in this evaluation report.

- Moving forward we will further develop the highly effective assessment practice which was noted in this report and aim to further increase developmental written formative feedback to ensure all students reach their learning potential in all subject areas.
- The RE department will review and update the Junior Cycle units of learning for all year groups.

The following strengths, as highlighted in this report, will continue to be developed and nurtured within the RE department and beyond:

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with some excellent practice observed in lessons.
- Digital learning technologies (DLT) were used effectively and enhanced the learning experience while supporting high levels of motivation and independent learning.
- Whole-school provision and support for RE was very good, with excellent practice in relation to teacher professional learning (TPL).
- The RE department was supporting school improvement to a very high standard through exemplary engagement levels with whole school initiatives.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for RE was very good and the timetabling for the Junior Cycle RE in in line with the DE requirements.
- That teachers show commitment and enthusiasm for extending students' learning experiences in RE through a range of extra-curricular activities.
- That the RE department worked collaboratively with the AEN department to ensure that all students are supported and encouraged in their learning.
- The emphasis on the school's approach to inclusion was highlighted through the reference to SIM project and in relation to access to EAL and the use of digital technology supports.
- The recognition of exemplary practice in very good deployment practice; excellent engagement in teacher professional learning within the RE department and supporting development and improvement in the RE department and across the school through the Vocabulary Enrichment Programme was welcome.
- Also noted was that members of the RE team share their expertise beyond the school through online forums and in the support services and that the involvement of the RE dept at school and national level for developing creative and engaging resources is excellent practice and highly commended.

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