



# What Subject Inspections tell us about Junior Cycle implementation

## Key messages for students

### Background to the report

Department of Education inspectors evaluate the work of schools to help schools improve. In this report, inspectors wanted to find out if Junior Cycle is working as it was intended.

Junior Cycle is the programme of education provided by schools in first, second and third year. It was introduced into schools gradually from September 2014. You can learn more about Junior Cycle by clicking [here](#).



The inspectors had meetings with students, teachers and school management.



Inspectors evaluated teaching and learning in lessons in first, second and third year in **98** post-primary schools.



Inspectors observed **411** lessons in a wide range of subjects.

### What is going well in Junior Cycle?



- The quality of teaching and learning in most lessons observed was very good or good.
- Teachers were good at managing their classes and they had good knowledge of their subject and how to teach it.



- In most lessons, students had an opportunity to develop the key skills of Junior Cycle.
- Most teachers and students were positive about classroom-based assessment (CBA). Students were more positive than teachers about CBAs.



- Teachers have special meetings to support them in assessing CBAs. These are called subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings. Teachers said that these were going well.

## What could be going better in Junior Cycle?

Assessment could be used more during teaching and learning.



Sometimes when we are thinking about assessment, we assume that it is something that happens after the learning is over. So, students are often assessed at the end of the term or year. If students were assessed more often during teaching and learning, the experience and the outcomes would improve for everybody. It would also make assessment less stressful. This is called 'formative assessment'.

Teachers could help students to take more responsibility for their own learning.



If teachers use assessment frequently, they can give useful feedback to students on how to improve their learning. In doing this, teachers help students to reflect on their own learning and manage their learning better.

## What are schools doing to enhance the Junior Cycle experience?

As a result of the report's findings, schools are being encouraged to



schedule CBAs at different times throughout the school year



make sure that a CBA is instead of, not as well as, an in-house examination



use reports from SLAR meetings to help school improvement

As a result of the report's findings, teachers are being encouraged to



know exactly what they want students to learn in each unit of work, and give students an opportunity to demonstrate this learning



use assessment, including CBAs, during teaching and learning, not just afterwards



give more formative feedback to students



encourage students to assess the progress they are making in their learning

If you want to read the full report, click [here](#).