An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Subject Inspection: Computer Science and Digital Subjects
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Phobail Chuil Mhin
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Clonsilla Dublin15
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	91315O
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	30/04/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	02/09/2026

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 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>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>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. 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.
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.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, 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.
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.
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 Bí Cineálta.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Dates of inspection	28/04/2026 and 30/04/2026
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 four lessons • Review of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Coolmine Community School is a co-educational post-primary school operating under the joint patronage of the Vincentians, La Sainte Union Sisters and the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education & Training Board (DDLETB). There were 1019 students enrolled at the time of the inspection. The school offered the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). There were three classes for students with autism.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall.
- All lessons featured affirming, supportive environments and students achieved strong learning outcomes, displaying proficiency across a wide range of skills.
- There was good quality assessment; students engaged well in project work and tasks promoted self-assessment and reflection.
- Subject provision and whole-school support was of a good quality; a digital learning plan was in place, with a digital learning team to promote growth and development in the digital space.
- There was scope to improve the provision and planning for the LCA subject, Introduction to Information and Communication Technology (ICT).
- Planning and preparation was very good overall and the majority of plans were of a very high standard, featuring approaches for differentiation, positive affirmation and links to resources.

Recommendations

- In some instances, students had difficulty sustaining focus for the entire duration of time assigned for tasks. Teachers should plan shorter task cycles, where necessary, with clear, targeted goals and alternate these tasks with class discussions and reflective questioning.
- While teachers provided effective oral feedback during lessons, there was scope to improve the quality and quantity of recorded feedback. Teachers should develop approaches to providing written formative feedback, so that students can better identify and set targets for improvement.
- Students in second and third year did not have opportunities to engage with Digital Subjects. The school should investigate the feasibility of introducing a relevant subject, for example, an optional junior cycle short course, to better cater to the interests of students and to provide continuity towards the senior cycle.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Teaching and learning was of a very good quality overall.
- All lessons were structured well, with students readily accessing materials for the lesson from the digital platform. Students who participated in the focus groups said that they appreciated the way in which materials were made available, as they made lessons easier to follow and it helped them to understand the assigned tasks. All lessons featured a positive learning environment where teachers regularly affirmed students' efforts.
- Teachers communicated learning intentions well orally or visually at the beginning of lessons and students were facilitated to understand what they would be learning about during the lessons, as well as how the lesson fit into the wider context of their learning.
- Teachers summarised the learning at the conclusion of the lessons and discussed their goals in subsequent lessons. These are good practices which the team have embedded; as a next step, teachers should facilitate students to become more active participants, becoming involved in discussing their learning at these stages of the lessons.
- Tasks were selected appropriately for the lessons and teachers allocated most of the lessons' time to students working actively. Most students engaged confidently in their assigned tasks and teachers had high expectations for their learning. In some instances, students had difficulty sustaining focus for the entire duration of time assigned for tasks. It is recommended therefore, that teachers plan for shorter task cycles, with specific targets for students, as appropriate, interspersed with classroom discussion and reflective questioning.
- Throughout all lessons, teachers moved around the classroom to monitor and assist students as they completed their tasks. Students said that they appreciated this and when teachers actively engaged with them. In a few lessons, teachers provided differentiated tasks for students, which enabled students to engage more deeply with the learning. This is very good practice and should be shared and used by the subject team.
- Teachers modelled and encouraged good practices and procedures when engaging with their work in every lesson, for example, by including comments in their code. It would be advantageous for teachers to include some of these key procedures and success criteria, which were regularly referred to, in visual displays around the learning environment.
- Students were supportive of one another and had opportunities to work with others informally in all lessons. There was clear evidence of strong communication and collaboration skills being developed, alongside skills in time management, project management, and reporting across both junior and senior cycles.
- Students working on their applied learning tasks (ALTs) were granted considerable freedom to select areas of interest to them, while teachers provided supportive structured guidelines. Students were facilitated to engage with and reflect on the iterative development process, and they did so very effectively. Through formal collaboration, students worked together effectively to develop innovative and creative solutions, and they presented their findings to the class. Students who participated in a focus group talked about how highly they valued the learning from the ALTs, how they broadened their skills in computer science and project development, in addition to it being an enjoyable experience, of which they were proud.
- Overall, there was good quality assessment.
- Teachers provided solution samples to students, which were useful in guiding them in their self-corrections. There were plans for students to formally assess each others' work as part of a longer task in a few lessons, and some informal peer assessment was observed. Peer assessment would be a valuable assessment approach for the subject department to develop further.

- While teachers provided effective oral feedback during lessons, there was scope to improve the quality and quantity of recorded feedback. Teachers should increase written formative feedback, to help students to better recall, recognise and set targets for improvement.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- Subject provision and whole-school support was of a good quality overall.
- All first-year students had a weekly forty-minute lesson in Computer Studies. All students in TY took part in a ten-week sampling module in Computer Science and could subsequently select Computer Science for the Leaving Certificate. Students in LCA undertook the module, Introduction to ICT.
- Uptake for Computer Science was strong, with the subject typically available across one or two subject option lines for the Leaving Certificate. Timetabling for Computer Science was appropriate, and two teachers actively taught the subject. Timetabling for Introduction to ICT was less than effective as there was a shortfall for the present sixth-year students as they had not engaged with the programme in the first term of the year. The senior management team was committed to ensuring that this would not occur in future years.
- The school was considering expanding Digital Subjects in the Junior Cycle. As students in second and third year did not have opportunities to engage with Digital Subjects, it is recommended that the school investigate the feasibility of adding a relevant short course as an option or otherwise.
- The school had undertaken considerable infrastructural improvements, such as a new digital network in the past year. This was in preparation, in particular, for the movement towards students using individual devices.
- The school's digital learning plan outlined these recent changes and an analysis of strengths, challenges, opportunities and threats to the progression of infrastructure and the introduction of one-to-one devices. An action plan was in place, which focused on the sharing of digital expertise and the development of a digital team.
- In the past, students had opportunities to become involved in extra-curricular activities, such as the coding club. Students who participated in focus groups talked about positive experiences with themed events such as safer internet day and computer science week as part of their classes. They said that they appreciated such events and opportunities to get involved in related activities outside of the curriculum. These would be valuable experiences to re-introduce and develop.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation was very good. Individual lessons were prepared well, and units of learning had been developed for all Digital Subjects.
- Computer Studies helped first-year students to develop a broad range of skills and knowledge. Students were introduced to the school's digital platform, office software and typing. They also gained important digital safety skills, learning about scamming, phishing, cyber-security, digital footprints and cyber-bullying. When planning towards the introduction of new devices for students, it would be also valuable to facilitate students with options in tools and software which would complement these values of security, safety and digital footprint minimisation.
- Plans for Computer Science were very good and units of learning and included guidance for each individual lesson. These included specific strategies to support differentiation, in addition to keywords and specific examples of positive feedback for students with subject specific language for each lesson.
- The TY sampling course was well-designed and offered a variety of experiences for students. The module introduced embedded systems, coding and web design.
- Plans for introduction to ICT provided a sequenced outline of key elements from the course. As the timelines for the listed learning outcomes were quite long, there was

considerable scope to extend the level of detail to meet the quality observed in other plans.

- As part of a school-wide initiative, the subject department performed analysis of leaving certificate examination results which included a reflection, with possible interventions proposed to ameliorate practices and examination outcomes.
- There was good evidence of reflection and iterative development in the planning, and it would be useful for the team to introduce an action plan with targets for improvements to teaching, learning and assessment, to promote the embedding of practices.

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

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For the students of Scoil Phobail Chuil Mhin about their learning in Computer Science and Digital Subjects

Date of inspection: 30/04/2026

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?

- Teaching and learning was very good; teachers were very supportive, providing constructive and positive oral feedback to students.
- Support from the school for the subject was good, though some development was needed for the LCA subject, Introduction to ICT.
- Teachers' plans for the Digital Subjects were very good.

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

- Teachers have been asked to make tasks shorter with clear goals, and include more class talks and questions.
- To help students set learning targets, teachers should expand ways that students receive feedback.
- The school should investigate the possibility of adding a Digital Subject for students in second and third year.

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

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