An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Science & Chemistry
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St. Kevin's Community College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Fonthill Road Clondalkin Dublin 22
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	70042L
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	27/02/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	21/05/2025

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 evaluated learning and teaching in Science & Chemistry 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	25/02/2025 and 27/02/2025
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 relevant staff

School context

St Kevin's Community College is a co-educational post-primary school. At the time of the inspection, the school had an enrolment of 490 students and offered the Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). The school participated in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Through DEIS Connect "Bridging the Digital Divide", the school provided digital devices to every student. The school also provided the Back to Education Initiative (BTEI), part-time education programmes for young people and adults which aims to give participants an opportunity to combine a return to learning with family, work and other responsibilities.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good or very good.
- Supportive and respectful relationships between teachers and their students were apparent in all lessons.
- It was evident that teachers knew their students very well and differentiated the learning intentionally.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for Science and Chemistry was good. Chemistry had recently been added to the curriculum.
- In a few instances, the availability of laboratory equipment constrained the learning.
- The quality of planning and preparation was good overall. Individual lessons were well organised.

Recommendations

- Students need to extend their ability to investigate their own ideas in Science. The science teachers should incorporate the development of more independent inquiry into their lessons.
- Senior management and teachers should expedite the purchasing of equipment to ensure sufficient materials are available in the laboratories.
- Students completed both house examinations and classroom-based assessments (CBAs). Senior management should lead a review of the assessment procedures and plan for the replacement of in-house examinations with Classroom-Based Assessments, where relevant.
- The schemes of work for Science required improvement to reach a good standard; teachers should formulate detailed units of learning that support skill development.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good or very good.
- Teachers frequently greeted students by name and welcomed them into lessons, thus creating a warm atmosphere and strategically supporting measures to achieve DEIS targets during lessons.
- Teachers outlined the intended learning in almost all lessons. These intentions were well phrased in terms of what students should know, understand and be able to do by the end of the lesson. In line with good practice the intended learning for junior cycle classes was directly informed by the specification and the related action verbs. To develop their practice, teachers should contextualise the intended learning to their learners' needs and interests.
- During one lesson the teacher purposefully used the learning intentions to reinforce understanding and remind students of their expectations. There was scope for short formative assessments to be used to inform future teaching and for students to gain insight into their own individual progress during lessons.
- In almost all lessons, students were highly engaged, motivated to learn and they understood the learning process.
- Teachers facilitated active learning in the majority of lessons observed. In the most effective lessons, the purposeful learning experiences chosen by teachers allowed students to learn by doing and to accept mistakes as valuable parts of the learning process. These diverse learning experiences allowed students to work at their own pace and with their peers, which is inclusive practice. Where student experience was less effective, students tended to be a little passive in the learning. All teachers should include active learning activities that are engaging and challenging.
- It was evident from students' answers that they were developing subject knowledge and understanding. Students also displayed their skills in the majority of lessons; they worked effectively with each other during group tasks, students also demonstrated their ability to think and manage information during practical work and a matching activity.
- Copybooks revealed that students' laboratory report writing skills were developing. There was scope for students to extend their ability to investigate their own ideas in Science. All teachers should plan for this to occur incrementally over time.
- The main method of assessment used, during the observed lessons, was verbal questioning and teacher observations. The copybooks revealed that students sometimes self-assessed their work and often added useful information to their answers. The copybooks also frequently contained written formative feedback from the students' teacher. Teachers should facilitate students to act on the guidance they received to improve their work.
- It was apparent that teachers knew their students very well and adjusted learning and teaching to support students. English as an additional language (EAL) learners were supported through the use of visual aids and handouts, and the strategic use of a buddy seating arrangement. It would be beneficial for EAL learners to be provided with the Post-Primary Languages Ireland "language mats" that translate everyday classroom language for students. EAL learners would further benefit from a subject specific glossary and specific targets on how to improve their English.
- The focus group of students were very positive about their experiences and outcomes in Science and Chemistry. Students undoubtedly enjoyed doing experiments and they expressed how they would like to do more experiments where possible. Students reported with pride, how they enjoyed teaching Science to visiting primary school students. Students described how the use of digital technologies supported them in conducting research in Science. Several students in the group capably demonstrated their knowledge of the need to cross-reference their sources and avoid bias when communicating in Science.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for the subjects was good.
- In response to student voice and needs, senior management recently introduced Chemistry to the senior cycle programme which is commendable. In doing so, senior management maximised opportunities for students to achieve their full potential. Senior management and teachers will need to ensure this positive start to the provision of Chemistry is sustained into the future.
- The timetabling of Science and Chemistry was in line with requirements.
- Senior management supported and encouraged the engagement in teacher professional learning and upskilling. One member of the science department was undertaking further studies, which is highly commendable and will be hugely beneficial to students.
- Senior management had reacted proactively to ensure qualified personnel were deployed to teach the subjects and provide for student preferences.
- While Science was an optional subject for Junior Cycle, the school accommodated students to select a Science subject for Leaving Certificate, even if they had not undertaken Science at Junior Cycle. This is supportive and inclusive practice.
- As some students did not study Science, senior management should consider the twenty-four statements of learning from the Framework for Junior Cycle, during the next evaluation of the school's Junior Cycle programme. The senior management should confirm these statements are central to the programme offered by the school to their students.
- Access to the laboratory was very good for students. However, in one lesson observed during the inspection, the lack of sufficient materials constrained the learning; students in the class watched a small number of their peers carry out an experiment. Senior management and teachers should collaborate to ensure that students have access to sufficient materials to allow all students to get hands-on experiences of carrying out investigations.
- The school provided useful individualised support to students and their parents and guardians when choosing the subjects for senior cycle. Senior management described the great efforts that went into providing an information night; the school's presentation was enhanced using a translated live captioning and booklets to cater for the diverse population of parents. Students also availed of one-to-one meetings with teachers who used data from aptitude testing and their own professional knowledge when discussing subject options, which is very effective practice.
- The school had engaged very positively in DEIS planning. The senior management led a DEIS team in setting positively phrased meaningful targets across the eight pillars. These targets were specific, measurable and time bound and were buttressed by numerous strategies that subject teachers could enact in their lessons to support the achievement of the targets.
- Students completed house exams and classroom-based assessments. Senior management and teachers should examine the assessment procedures and plan for the replacement of in-house examinations with Classroom-Based Assessments for students, where relevant in line with circular 0028/2023.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation was good.
- High-quality individual teacher planning was observed in all lessons and this positively impacted students' experience.
- Science teachers had completed health and safety risk analysis for the laboratories, which is good practice.
- Subject plans demonstrated that substantial work was completed to support collaborative planning for Chemistry and Science. However, the schemes of work for Science required improvement to achieve a good standard. Teachers should clearly identify learning units derived from learning outcomes with detailed linkages to

associated teaching methodologies and assessment strategies. Each of these units should be clearly linked to the “Nature of Science” strand to support strategic skill development.

- The TY plans required further details regarding the intended learning for students, learning activities, specific assessments and student record keeping.
- Planning for the new senior cycle Chemistry specification should begin with a focus on forming units of learning and skill progression from junior cycle.
- Commendably the subject department had begun to identify their strengths, areas for improvement and had set some targets to achieve. It would be beneficial to identify how and when these targets will be met.

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.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the students of St. Kevin's Community College about their learning in Science & Chemistry
Date of inspection: 27/02/2025

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 Science & Chemistry.

What were the main findings of the inspection?

- There was a welcoming and supportive atmosphere during lessons.
- Some students asked for Chemistry to be introduced at senior cycle. Senior management supported students to study Chemistry.
- Lessons were well planned and organised.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Science & Chemistry?

- Teachers should support students to investigate their own ideas when it is safe to do so.
- Senior management and teachers should ensure that there is enough equipment for students to use.
- The CBA should replace one house exam.
- Teachers should update their subject plans.

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