Subject Inspection: Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE)
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Our Lady's School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Templeogue Road Terenure Dublin 6W
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60860Q
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	06/11/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	22/01/2026

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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE) 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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:	
Child Protection	*Bí Cineálta*
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.	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/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 *Bí Cineálta.*

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	06/11/2025
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with senior leadership and teachers • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal, deputy principals and CSPE teachers

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School context

Our Lady's School is a post-primary school for girls with an enrolment of 800 students. The school provides Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Established, the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. All students study CSPE at Junior Cycle.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

• The quality of teaching and learning was excellent in the lessons observed; teachers demonstrated very strong subject knowledge alongside highly effective pedagogical practices.
• The quality of subject provision and whole school support was excellent; school management strongly supported CSPE provision.
• CSPE was highly valued in the school, and contributed to students' wellbeing, civic awareness, and personal development.
• A broad range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities reinforced learning in CSPE.
• The quality of planning and preparation was excellent; a very strong collaborative culture underpinned planning and practice.

Recommendations

There were no key recommendations arising from this evaluation

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching and learning was excellent in the lessons observed. Teachers demonstrated very strong subject knowledge alongside highly effective pedagogical practice and classroom management skills.
- Lessons were very well planned and well resourced. Teachers incorporated real-life materials into lessons, to make learning relevant and engaging.
- Universal Design for Learning principles were evident in task design, transitions, and pacing, enabling all students, including those with additional needs, to engage meaningfully and experience success. Tasks were clearly explained, carefully sequenced, and designed to allow all students to experience success. Individual and group learning activities effectively consolidated and extended learning
- A range of digital media was used purposefully and very effectively to enhance student engagement and represented exemplary practice. These included short video clips and, in one instance, an AI-generated video that prompted a rich discussion about responsible online research. The school's online learning platform was used very effectively to support learning, with students uploading homework and teachers providing individual formative feedback. Students reported that digital technologies supported their learning very effectively and described using digital tools to design and distribute surveys for classroom-based assessments.
- Opportunities to reflect on learning were well embedded in practice. For example, in some classes, students completed written reflections on what they had learned, which were shared and discussed in subsequent lessons. This represented very good practice. Students were further supported to reflect on their action projects through the use of a department-developed reflection template. This contributed positively to students' sense of ownership of and responsibility for their learning and supported the development of skills required for lifelong learning.
- Students completed a wide range of action projects, including podcasts, poster campaigns, presentations, and themed awareness activities. Students in the focus group described a range of learning activities in which they had engaged and which they had found rewarding. They reported that many tasks required careful thought, collaboration, and the application of social awareness. They sourced information beyond classroom materials, including real-life examples, which deepened their understanding and enhanced the quality of their work. Reflection was integral to each stage of the learning process, and students progressively developed greater clarity and depth in their reflective writing by third year. All students strongly agreed that CSPE was a very valuable subject that had helped them become more aware of the world around them. They gave examples of how learning in CSPE had enabled them to participate more meaningfully in discussions outside the classroom.
- Assessment practices supported learning very effectively. Feedback on action projects and Classroom-Based Assessments was particularly strong and provided clear guidance for improvement. Student copybooks showed clear evidence of learning, and teacher correction and feedback were used effectively to progress learning. Teachers encouraged students to reflect on feedback and consider how learning in CSPE influenced their decision-making.
- Classrooms were print-rich and displayed examples of students' CSPE work which contributed to a positive learning environment and promoted student wellbeing. CSPE noticeboards and displays throughout the school further highlighted the importance of the subject to the wider school community.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole school support was excellent, school management strongly supporting CSPE provision. A stable core teaching team was maintained, and senior management prioritised continuity of teacher assignment from

first to third year. This enabled teachers to build strong relationships with students and plan progressively towards learning outcomes and CBAs.

- A common subject planning template had been collaboratively developed at whole-school level over previous years. This planning structure very effectively supported teacher collaboration, continuity of learning, and common assessment practices. It also ensured that new and substitute teachers had easy access to current schemes of work and shared resources.
- Professional learning was strongly supported, with teachers engaging in continuous professional development through the Association of CSPE Teachers, Oide workshops, and online training opportunities.
- CSPE was clearly a highly valued subject in the school and contributed very positively to overall wellbeing provision. Curricular themes were mapped centrally across wellbeing subjects to avoid duplication and promote coherence, and students were encouraged to record wellbeing activities for inclusion in their Junior Cycle Profile of Achievement. This was excellent practice.
- Academic progress was supported through an academic monitoring system. The CSPE department placed a strong emphasis on formative assessment, aligning closely with whole-school self-evaluation priorities related to feedback, wellbeing, and differentiation. Written feedback to parents reflected this emphasis.
- Leadership of school development was highly effective. The CSPE department engaged positively with change and demonstrated a long-term commitment to embedding good practice. The celebration of student voice and action projects through the school website and social media accounts further raised the profile of CSPE. Students in the focus group and in lessons responded very positively to CSPE and expressed genuine enjoyment of the subject. The subject was clearly highly valued in the school, and its contribution to student wellbeing, civic awareness, and personal development was evident.
- A broad range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities reinforced learning in CSPE. The schools' house system promoted awareness of social issues and fundraising, while other activities celebrated the diverse cultural backgrounds of the student body. The student council promoted student voice, including participation in policy developments such as the mobile phone policy.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation was excellent, a very strong collaborative culture underpinning planning and practice.
- Individual lesson planning was excellent for all lessons observed, with dedicated resources developed and sourced in advance.
- Collaboration and collegiality within the CSPE department were very strong. Teachers new to the subject reported that colleagues were highly supportive and open in sharing teaching strategies. They also reported that senior management's open-door approach further enhanced this collaborative culture.
- Regular subject department planning meetings took place, including scheduled meetings at key points in the year. These meetings were used to discuss assessment practices, review feedback quality, share teaching strategies, and reflect on action projects. Teachers routinely shared resources through a central digital directory, reducing duplication of work. This was very good practice.
- The highly effective shared subject plan was a user-friendly, live document aligned closely with the CSPE specification. Staff reported that the planning documentation reduced anxiety for teachers new to CSPE and contributed to a strong sense of collective responsibility. The CSPE plan, incorporating hyperlinks to resources and relevant curricular information and time-bound schemes of work for each year group, supported lesson preparation. Planning also referenced learning outcomes, wellbeing indicators and Junior Cycle key skills. As many CSPE learning outcomes are interrelated across strands, a non-linear planning approach, with elements of the three

CSPE strands taught across the three years of junior cycle, enabled students to make meaningful connections across their learning. This was excellent practice.

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

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

For the students of Our Lady's School about their learning in Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE)
Date of inspection:

06/11/2025

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 Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE).

What were the main findings of the inspection?

- The quality of teaching and learning was excellent.
- CSPE helped improve students' wellbeing and made them more aware of how they could have a role in their community and beyond.
- There were lots of activities outside the classroom that helped students' learning in CSPE.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in Civic Social & Political Education (CSPE)?

- There were no recommendations made

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