

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in History

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Árdscoil La Salle
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Raheny Road Raheny Dublin 5
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60291D

Date of Inspection: 20-10-2016



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 History under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection: History

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	18 and 20 October 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Ardscoil La Salle is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Certificate (JC), Leaving Certificate (LC) and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school also offers an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Current enrolment is 241 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- The majority of lessons were characterised by respectful interactions between teachers and students.
- Commendably, constructive formative feedback was evident in student copybooks, particularly with senior-cycle students.
- While some good examples of student-centred approaches were observed, the main pedagogical approach in the majority of lessons was not differentiated.
- Uptake of History for Leaving Certificate is very good.
- The history department is commended for its analysis and review of certificate examination results.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to appropriately challenge students in a mixed-ability setting, teachers should develop and share practices in the area of differentiation and further integrate the use of cooperative learning strategies into lessons.
- More variation of questioning strategies, that are inclusive of all and actively engage and challenge students, is advised.
- Teachers, in collaboration with management, should explore cross-curricular options in order to provide students with opportunities to engage with some form of historical or social studies in TY.
- There is a need for further whole-school guidelines on the organisation and mentoring of Professional Masters in Education (PME) teachers.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good.
- Stimulating learning environments have been created in each of the rooms visited with displays of student work, key-word notices and a variety of historical posters.
- The majority of lessons were characterised by respectful interactions between teachers and students. In a small number of lessons, some students were not engaged with the learning task and their behaviour had an impact on the progression of the lesson. In these lessons there was a need for clear and consistent classroom routines to be established so that student behaviour did not disrupt the learning of others.
- A whole-school approach to sharing with students what they will be learning in class has been initiated and was evident in all lessons. Best practice was observed in one lesson where the learning intentions were expressed in terms of what a student will know or be able to do and they were reviewed at the end of the lesson to assess progress.
- The use of both primary and secondary sources brought an important visual element to many of the lessons visited. Student analysis of these sources was guided appropriately through the use of whole-class oral questioning. To further develop students' analytical skills, teachers should vary their teaching approach to provide opportunities for students to identify and draw conclusions related to the evidence both individually and collaboratively.
- In a minority of lessons, when students were involved in paired or small group activities such as developing a character profile of different people who lived in Nazi Germany, they demonstrated good levels of interest, contributed their opinions, discussed and asked questions related to the topic.
- While some good examples of student-centred approaches were observed, the main pedagogical approach in the majority of lessons was not differentiated; for example in these lessons students experienced the same material, tasks and homework. In order to appropriately challenge students in a mixed-ability setting, teachers should develop and share practices in the area of differentiation and further integrate the use of cooperative learning strategies into their lessons.
- Appropriate use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to present information and structure lessons on topics such as the impact of the Reformation on Ireland. In addition, electronic devices facilitated student access to textbook content during lessons.
- The quality of assessment was good. Teachers made good use of directed and global questioning to monitor students' overall understanding of key words, facts and knowledge. However, in some lessons, a few students answered multiple questions while others answered none and, at times, there was a need for questions to delve more deeply to challenge students further to foster deeper historical understanding. More variation of questioning strategies, that are inclusive of all and actively engage and challenge students, is recommended.
- Very good examples of well-designed worksheets were used in a few lessons, combining comprehension-style questions, primary sources and extended writing tasks to engage students during lessons and for homework. This approach merits further use.

- A sample of student copybooks was reviewed during the evaluation. Commendably, constructive formative feedback was evident, particularly with senior-cycle students, providing guidance on areas for improvements.
- In the majority of lessons, there was an emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary to support the development of students' literacy skills. In one lesson, effective practice was observed where a quiz was used to revise key words, concepts and knowledge. This provided opportunities for students to work collaboratively and to demonstrate their knowledge of the topic. Student enjoyment in learning was evident.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support is good. History is a core subject in the junior cycle and is one of a number of subjects offered as an option to students at senior cycle. Uptake of History for Leaving Certificate is very good.
- History is not offered as part of the TY programme. In response to the keen interest shown by students in senior cycle, it is suggested that teachers, in collaboration with management, should explore cross-curricular options in order to provide students with opportunities to engage with some form of historical or social studies in TY.
- The school has very good ICT facilities in classrooms and the history department has developed a range of good-quality online material for students to access such as lesson material and additional resources.
- School management is very supportive of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD).
- A significant number of junior-cycle classes are taught by student teachers. While some procedures around supporting these new teachers are in place, a higher level of support and collaboration is needed. It is recommended that further whole-school guidelines be provided on the organisation and mentoring of PME teachers.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good. Department meetings are held regularly and it is good practice that minutes of meetings are appropriately documented. Teachers also meet regularly on an informal basis.
- Teachers are very committed to their work and there is an openness to collaboration within the department. To develop capacity and experience, the department should share responsibility for coordination of subject planning.
- The history department planning folder gives a good outline of the provision and organisation of the subject in the school. An agreed scheme of work has been developed which focuses on content to be covered with each year group. It is recommended that schemes of work should be revised and updated to promote a more developmental approach that would link the intended learning outcomes with teaching and assessment methodologies, and resources.
- The history department is commended for its analysis and review of certificate examination results. It is good practice that the department has identified specific actions related to teaching and learning that would support improvements. Review of these actions should be

part of department meetings in order to monitor their effect on student learning and outcomes.

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.

The board of management 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.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Ardscoil La Salle is pleased with the History Inspection Report. The Board welcomes the acknowledgement of the good quality teaching and learning taking place in the History department and also welcomes the recognition that 'the teachers are very committed to their work'. The Board welcomes the positive findings relating to the 'stimulating learning environments' in our classrooms and the 'respectful interactions between teachers and students' that were evident to the inspector. Recognition of the good quality subject provision and whole school support for History is also welcomed.

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 Board of Management, Senior Management and staff welcome the recommendations of this report. We, as a school community, are committed to improving the quality of teaching and learning in our school and we value reflection on our practice. We have arranged staff CPD on 'Differentiation in the Classroom' and we have already completed staff CPD on incorporating Cooperative Learning strategies. We are reviewing the TY curriculum for 2017/2018 and we will examine cross-curricular options with regard to History.

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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;