

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in History**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Balbriggan Community College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Pine Ridge Chapel St. Balbriggan
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	70010V

**Date of Inspection: 05-02-2020**



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**An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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. 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.

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.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	3 <sup>rd</sup> February and 5 <sup>th</sup> February 2020
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Balbriggan Community College is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of Dublin and Dun-Laoghaire Education and Training Board. The school has a current enrolment of 509 students and offers the Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with aspects of very good practice in a few lessons; the use of differentiated approaches to meet diverse student needs, including English as an additional language (EAL) needs, was limited in some lessons.
- In all lessons, there was a very good emphasis on the development of students' historical literacy which effectively supports whole-school DEIS targets.
- The overall quality of in-class assessment was good: there is a need for in-class questions to challenge students more.
- The quality of subject provision and whole school support for History, including support for students with additional needs is satisfactory; the identified needs of students with special educational needs (SEN), including EAL, were not adequately addressed in some lessons.
- The quality of planning and preparation for History is satisfactory; the history module for TY is not substantial enough to provide a high quality experience for students in the subject.
- The JCSP statements of learning and aspects of DEIS planning for attainment are not sufficiently incorporated into the History plan and do not inform teaching and learning.

#### Recommendations

- Teachers should make further use of differentiated teaching and learning approaches to ensure all students can access their learning and are appropriately challenged.
- Management should ensure CPD is provided to teachers in relation to team teaching and to supporting students with SEN and EAL needs.
- The history department should review its approach to the study of History for TY students to ensure they are provided with opportunities to develop their historical skills and engage with topics which interest them.

- The history department should plan for the implementation of relevant whole-school targets related to attainment and JCSP statements of learning to support improvements in learner outcomes.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with aspects of very good practice in a few lessons; the use of differentiated approaches to meet diverse student needs, including EAL needs, was limited in some lessons.
- In all lessons a very good rapport between teachers and students was evident. Overall, the majority of students displayed an interest in the topics being studied, engaged in collaborative tasks and were comfortable contributing their views during lessons.
- In most lessons, relevant learning intentions were appropriately shared with students. Good practice was noted where these were presented as what students should be able to know, do or understand by the end of the lesson. Very effective practice was evident in a few lessons where students were enabled to actively reflect on, apply and consolidate their learning. This type of approach should be more widely used.
- In the most effective lessons, students were provided with opportunities to reflect on prior learning and were supported through various activities to engage both individually and collaboratively to build on their answers. These approaches facilitated many students to effectively demonstrate their learning.
- In all lessons, there was a very good emphasis on the development of students' historical literacy through the use of strategies to address keywords and to focus on subject-specific vocabulary and concepts. This approach effectively supports the whole-school approach evident in DEIS planning.
- In a few lessons some students with EAL needs could not engage with the learning activities as they could not understand the language used for the task or the historical content presented. To support the literacy needs of these students, teachers should use additional EAL resources and alternative methodologies.
- The overall quality of in-class assessment was good. Graphic organisers were used successfully to summarise, categorise and make comparisons of art during the Renaissance. Mini-white boards supported revision of prior learning and assessment of on-going learning during effective lessons. These approaches should be extended in order to provide students with opportunities to develop their skills at applying their knowledge and demonstrating their understanding of the historical material.
- In the majority of lessons observed, whole-class oral questioning was the dominant assessment practice. Teachers used directed and global questioning appropriately to monitor students' overall understanding. However, many questions tended to be lower-order, requiring very brief answers, with teachers then expanding on the answers. At times, there was a need for questions to delve more deeply and to provide further challenge for students. Differentiated questioning strategies, that actively engage and challenge students to think critically, should be further developed.
- Very good practice was noted in a few lessons where an assessment review sheet is used for giving feedback following summative assessments. This review sheet provides opportunities for student to comment on their performance and to note improvements they can make. Through this approach, responsibility is placed on students to take ownership of their

learning, build on their learning goals and, through constructive formative feedback from the teacher, supports them to improve their learning.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole school support is satisfactory.
- Appropriate timetabled provision is made for the subject in all curricular programmes.
- During the evaluation, it was evident in the lessons observed, that some aspects of the organisation of team teaching were under-developed. Where effective team teaching was observed the teacher had a very good awareness of students' individual needs and employed strategies to meet them. This practice was not evident in all team-taught lessons observed. In order for team teaching to be effective, the identified needs of the students must be addressed and communicated to the staff involved.
- Senior management is supportive of teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) and a good range of whole-school in-service opportunities has taken place. To support history teachers involved in team teaching and in relation to supporting students with SEN and EAL needs, management should ensure further CPD is provided.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of planning and preparation for History is satisfactory.
- A review of minutes indicated that, appropriately, many aspects relating to the co-ordination and organisation of the department are discussed. To further promote a shared focus on classroom practice, teaching and learning should be included as a routine agenda item.
- All students follow the JCSP programme. Currently, the JCSP statements are predominantly completed by the History teachers after the learning has taken place. The JCSP statements are not sufficiently embedded in classroom practice and are not informing teaching and learning on a day-to-day basis. Significant work must be completed to ensure the operation of the JCSP programme is effectively supporting the learning needs of students.
- A TY module in History has been developed in conjunction with the geography department. On reviewing subject planning documentation and samples of student folders there is a greater emphasis on the geography aspects of the module. The history module for TY is not substantial enough to provide a high quality experience for students in the subject. The department should review its approach to the study of History for TY to ensure students are provided with opportunities to develop their historical skills and engage with topics which interest them.
- It was noted that aspects of DEIS planning for attainment are not fully incorporated into the history planning documentation or discussed as part of department meetings. Planning for the implementation of the whole-school targets related to attainment should be integrated into the subject plan to support improvements in learner outcomes.
- The history department conducts an annual analysis and review of certificate examination results. To benefit from this good practice, the department should develop specific actions, with agreed teaching and learning approaches and timeframes for review, to support improvements in teaching and learning and include these in their planning documentation.

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.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

Balbriggan Community College wishes to acknowledge the contents of the report. The Department has studied the report and welcomes the affirmation of good and aspects of very good practice in the teaching of History in Balbriggan Community College.

**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 college has noted the recommendations and the process of implementing the findings has begun as part of department planning and the process of self-evaluation. As a school we will use the report's findings to inform future subject department practice.

## 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 of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;