

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

**Subject Inspection in History**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Crana College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Crana Road Buncrana County Donegal
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	71140Q

**Date of Inspection: 10 October 2017**



### **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. 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; a response was not received from the board.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Date of inspection</b>	10-11 October 2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, subject coordinator and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Crana College is a co-educational post-primary school under the auspices of Donegal Education and Training Board (ETB). The school currently caters for 559 students. The following programmes are available: Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and Leaving Certificate Applied. History is an optional subject for both Junior and Leaving Certificate and is offered as a compulsory module in TY. 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 quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from very good to good.
- A main strength of the lessons was the respectful rapport between teachers and students.
- Very effective student learning was supported by student-centred active methodologies; less effective learning was evident in lessons where a more teacher-centred approach was taken.
- Differentiated strategies were evident during lessons through oral questioning and when some students were provided with additional attention as tasks were completed.
- The overall quality of whole-school provision and support for History is good; uptake for the subject at both junior and senior cycle has fluctuated over recent years.
- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation is good though whole-school DEIS and JCSP priorities are not incorporated into the history department plan.

#### Recommendations

- Teachers should plan for the greater use of student-centred activities in all lessons.
- The history department should review and monitor student uptake and liaise with senior management in relation to more effective promotion of the subject.
- The history department should incorporate aspects of whole-school planning relevant to the teaching of History into the subject plan.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from very good to good.
- The respectful rapport between teachers and students was a particular strength of the lessons observed. Classroom management was of a high standard and this allowed students to be engaged learners.
- Lesson aims were clearly communicated to students. This approach was most effective when the learning intentions were expressed in terms of what students should know or be able to do and progress was assessed either during or at the end of lesson.
- In lessons where the quality of learning was very effective, students worked collaboratively in groups and were provided with sufficient time to read, select key information, discuss and present their findings to the class on topics such as Bloody Sunday and the American War of Independence.
- Another very successful student-centred learning activity was observed in a lesson on local history as students researched oral testimonies online. Guided by the teacher, students selected themes, conducted research and collated their ideas using a placemat organiser to share with the rest of the class. Students engaged confidently and competently with these primary sources.
- Teachers prepared a range of good-quality resources including electronic presentations for lessons observed. When used to prompt discussion, guide and consolidate learning these presentations were most effective in supporting student engagement.
- In a few lessons, however, an overly teacher-centred approach was evident in the reading of information from a presentation to the class. In these instances, teachers should plan for the incorporation of more student-centred activities in order to promote historical enquiry and develop students' critical thinking skills.
- Differentiated strategies were evident during lessons through oral questioning and with some students being provided with additional attention as tasks were being completed. In one lesson, modified worksheets were also provided. Teachers should however be mindful to ensure that these differentiation strategies also cater for the high-achieving students.
- The quality of assessment was good overall. There was a consistent use of whole-class oral questioning to monitor students' understanding of key words, facts and knowledge. This good practice could be broadened to include approaches such as the use of open-ended questions and increased wait-time to foster deeper historical understanding.
- It was evident from reviewing students' copybooks that student progress was well monitored. Examples of good-quality feedback to students was evident on some Leaving Certificate assignments, where directional feedback on areas for improvement was provided. This type of approach should also be used with other year groups.
- As part of a whole-school approach to improving literacy, there was a very good emphasis on the development of students' historical literacy through a focus on subject-specific vocabulary and concepts in all lessons.

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

- The overall quality of whole-school provision and support for History is good. It is an optional subject with appropriate timetabling.
- Uptake for the subject at both junior and senior cycle has fluctuated over recent years. In an effort to address this, the history department should review and monitor student uptake and liaise with senior management in relation to more effective promotion of the subject.
- Deployment of teachers is in line with their qualifications, skills, knowledge and interests.
- Management are very supportive of teachers continuing professional development (CPD). A good range of whole-school in-service opportunities has been provided.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation is good. Department meetings are held regularly and minutes are recorded. A subject coordinator oversees the updating of the subject plan and convenes meetings. As a further means of strengthening capacity and experience amongst the team, consideration should be given to rotating the coordination role.
- A good-quality subject department plan is in place. This includes schemes of work for all year groups which, in line with good practice, are time-bound and laid out in terms of learning outcomes, assessment and resources. It was noted that aspects of DEIS and JCSP planning are not fully incorporated into the history department plan, such as the targets and actions in relation to attainment, literacy and numeracy. These whole-school initiatives should also be addressed in the subject plan.
- The history department conducts an annual analysis and review of certificate examination results. To benefit from this good practice, it is recommended that the department identify and implement specific actions related to teaching and learning that would support improvements and include these in their planning documentation.
- Good use of a virtual learning platform to share resources and provide feedback to students was observed in a few lessons.

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

## 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;