

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in History

REPORT

School name	Deele College
School address	Raphoe Lifford County Donegal
Roll number	71230R

Date of Inspection: 29-03-2017



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. 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.

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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	28-29 March 2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and subject teachers• Discussion with subject co-ordinator• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and subject teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Deele College is a Donegal Education and Training Board co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 556 students. All junior-cycle students study History in either the established History syllabus or in Environmental and Social Studies (ESS). Leaving Certificate History is an optional subject. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), 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 was good overall, with aspects of very good practice evident in several lessons.
- In all lessons, a good level of student engagement was evident, particularly in lessons where students were given opportunities to work collaboratively.
- While good differentiation for students of varying abilities was evident in some lessons, in the majority of lessons, a whole-class approach to teaching and assessment was adopted.
- The quality of in-class assessment was good; in some lessons there was a need to challenge students further.
- The quality of whole-school provision and support is good; History is provided in junior cycle and for Leaving Certificate but not as part of Transition Year (TY).
- The quality of planning and preparation is very good: a collaborative, collegial approach to subject planning for History was evident.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to enhance a collaborative approach to learning and to allow for greater differentiation in mixed-ability classes, more use of student-centred approaches is required.
- Further use of questioning strategies that are inclusive of all and challenge students should be incorporated into lessons.
- In collaboration with management, teachers should explore cross-curricular options in order to provide students with opportunities to engage with some form of historical or social studies in TY.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good overall, with aspects of very good practice evident in several lessons. There is scope to enhance the quality of student learning through greater differentiation and further incorporation of student-centred approaches in lessons.
- In all lessons, classroom atmosphere was characterised by very good standards of behaviour with respectful interactions between teachers and students.
- Lessons were taught in a supportive learning environment with examples of student project work, key-word posters and relevant historical material on display in each of the history rooms.
- Most lessons were well structured and began with an outline of the learning intentions or the content to be covered. However, student responsibility for their own learning would be enhanced by articulation of the intentions in terms of what the students should know or be able to do, and by a review at the end of lessons to assess students' progress.
- Good examples of teacher-designed worksheets and handouts were used in many lessons, combining comprehension-style questions, primary sources and mind maps to engage students. However, when planning, teachers need to be mindful of the pace and pitch of lesson activities to ensure that students are given appropriate time to engage in a meaningful way to support deeper learning.
- In most lessons, a good level of student engagement was evident, particularly in lessons where students were given opportunities to work collaboratively. For example, a matching exercise was used effectively to challenge students' understanding of the feudal system and to revise previous learning by sorting and identifying key facts through peer discussion.
- Primary sources were used effectively in a few lessons by teachers to support the development of students' critical thinking skills. For example, to enable students to identify key aspects of Plantation towns they reviewed maps and completed a mixture of lower and higher-order questions, individually and collaboratively, which facilitated them to draw conclusions about life at that time.
- While good differentiation for students of varying abilities was evident in some lessons through the oral questions teachers posed and in one-to-one interactions with students, in the majority of lessons, a whole-class approach to teaching and assessment was adopted. In order to enhance a collaborative approach to learning and to allow for greater differentiation in mixed-ability classes more use of student-centred approaches is required.
- The quality of in-class assessment was good. Directed and global questioning were used effectively to monitor students' overall understanding. 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 and to foster a greater historical understanding. More variation of questioning strategies, that are inclusive of all and challenge students, is recommended.
- It was evident from reviewing students' journals and copybooks that homework was assigned regularly and student progress was monitored, with good oral feedback provided in all lessons. In a few instances, supportive formative comments from teachers were noted in

copybooks; there is scope to extend this good practice to provide students with clear advice on how they can improve their learning.

- Students' historical literacy was strongly reinforced by teachers' deliberate focus on key words, which is in line with the whole-school approach evident in DEIS planning. In one particular lesson, the overt encouragement of students' social skills in answering questions, sharing their research with the class and listening to each other was particularly impressive.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school provision and support is good.
- The majority of students follow the junior-cycle history syllabus while students who are part of the Junior Certificate Schools Programme study ESS. There is appropriate timetabling for ESS at junior cycle. However, the provision of two periods for first and second years and three periods for third year should be reviewed to ensure that students can engage fully with the learning outcomes of the History syllabus.
- Leaving Certificate option bands are generated around student choice and uptake at this level is very good for History.
- While there is a good interest amongst students in History, the subject is not provided as part of the TY programme. It is suggested that teachers, in collaboration with management, 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 is supportive of the training needs of student teachers and it is suggested that closer collaboration around teaching and learning be supported by the development of whole-school guidelines in this area.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is very good. During the course of the inspection, both the History and the ESS planning folders were reviewed. A collaborative, collegial approach to subject planning for History was evident. As a further means of strengthening capacity and building experience, the department should consider rotating co-ordination duties amongst the team.
- A very comprehensive subject department plan is in place. It is good practice that the schemes of work for History are time-bound and laid out in terms of learning outcomes, assessment, methodologies and resources.
- The history department conducts an annual analysis of student achievement in the certificate examinations. There is scope to use this data further to inform actions that support continuous improvements in teaching and learning in line with whole school DEIS planning.

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 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. 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;