

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in History

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ardcoil Phadraig
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Granard Co. Longford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	71710I

Date of Inspection: 21-11-2017



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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	21-11-2017
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Ardscoil Phádraig is a growing co-educational school with an enrolment of 256 students and is managed under the auspices of Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board. The school takes part in the Delivery Equality of Opportunity for Schools (DEIS) action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school currently offers the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. A Transition Year (TY) programme is in its second year in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to good.
- Learning intentions were displayed in most lessons but were not always student focused.
- In all lessons, there was a good emphasis on the development of students' historical literacy.
- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were respectful and supported a positive learning environment.
- Both management and the history team support the development of History in the school.

Recommendations

- High expectations of students' attainment should be evident in the learning intentions and planned activities for each lesson.
- In order to support the full range of student abilities, greater use should be made of differentiated methodologies.
- The history department is urged to engage with the History Teachers' Association of Ireland (HTAI) and other agencies, to support the continuing professional development of teachers.
- History should be included in the TY programme in order to extend students' contact with History and to provide a platform that will help to encourage senior cycle students to consider History as a Leaving Certificate subject choice.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to good.
- Classroom management was uniformly good. A good relationship between teachers and students was evident in all lessons.
- All classrooms visited displayed a print-rich environment to promote the subject. Desks were arranged in a way that was conducive to collaboration.
- Though detailed individual planning was in evidence in most lessons, some learning activities did not always suit the learning needs of the class. High expectation of students' attainment should be reflected in the learning intentions and planned activities for each lesson.
- Learning intentions were displayed in most lessons observed. Best practice was when those learning intentions were student focused, expressing clearly what the students' should be able to do by the end of the lesson; shared with the class as the lesson progressed; and with time set aside at the end for a review so that learning could be consolidated.
- While a few examples of student-centred approaches were observed, the majority of lessons adopted a whole-class approach with the same content, tasks and homework for all. In order to meet the learning needs of all students, greater use should be made of differentiated methodologies.
- In the best lesson, a range of resources was used, such as film clips, the whiteboard, the data projector, prepared handouts and the textbook, which supported student engagement. An emphasis on student engagement should be a feature of all lessons across the department.
- Relevant aspects of local history were included in some lessons, increasing the students' awareness and appreciation of their locality.
- In most lessons, students were given opportunities to work together through group work or pair work. However, a more structured approach to collaborative learning is urged in order to maximise students' learning potential. This can be achieved by giving clear instructions, giving the task a specified timeframe and allocating specific roles within the groups. Teachers should be mindful of the pace and pitch of the lesson activity so that students are given appropriate time to showcase and share their learning in a meaningful way to support deeper learning.
- Most lessons made good use of whole-class oral questioning to monitor students' overall understanding. This good practice should be extended to include higher-order questioning to ensure students engage more deeply with the learning and foster deeper historical understanding.
- Extended writing tasks for students were lacking in the sample of student copybooks collected. Students, across all programmes, should be given frequent opportunities and support to complete extended writing tasks.
- Homework is frequently set and corrected. However, the provision of regular, meaningful and developmental formative feedback on students' written work is an area for development. Formative feedback will support students to improve with their learning.
- The development of students' literacy skills in terms of key words that were relevant to the topic and an emphasis on a subject-specific 'Word of the Week' was evidenced in all lessons.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support has improved very recently.
- History is an optional subject at junior cycle, chosen at enrolment stage. A consideration for management could be to offer a taster programme for History in first year which would promote the subject and support its viability into the future.
- School management has shown its commitment to the subject by recently introducing History to the option bands at senior cycle. It is recommended that History be included in the TY programme in order to extend students' contact with and to encourage the uptake of the subject at Leaving Certificate level.
- Whole-school support for History is in evidence in the initiatives already in place to promote the subject, such as the interesting tasks that took place at the recent open evening and plans are already underway to enhance the history section of the reading room.
- In the interest of supporting History in the school and for the continuing professional development of the history team, engagement with the HTAI and other agencies is recommended.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A collaborative approach to subject planning is evident in the good subject plan.
- Schemes of work are laid out in terms of learning outcomes and assessment but should include explicit links to learning methodologies.
- Attainment in the summative and certificate examinations has already been identified as an area for development for the school. Teachers do conduct an annual analysis of the certificate examinations results but this should be extended to include house examinations. Teachers' reflections and self-evaluation on these should be recorded to inform teaching and learning of History for the future and used for target setting.

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 of the school 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.

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	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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the History subject inspection report on behalf of the whole school community. The Board of Management gratefully acknowledges the contribution of the staff and students to the success of the subject inspection.

We accept the recommendations as valid and look forward to building on the many strengths outlined in the report and incorporating the recommendations for development of the subject.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

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