

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of History
REPORT**

**St John's College De La Salle
Ballyfermot, Dublin 10
Roll number: 60510M**

Date of inspection: 28 March 2012



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HISTORY**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	27-28 March 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good quality teaching and learning was observed in all lessons evaluated.
- Student learning was supported well throughout the lessons.
- History is taught and studied in a supportive whole-school context.
- The progress of the students in History is monitored well.
- The history teachers work collaboratively to support the development of the teaching and study of History in the school.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The timetabling of a majority of a class's history lesson periods in afternoon time slots, and the deployment of members of the history team to teach the subject to one class group only should be avoided, where practicable, within the constraints of the timetable.
 - Means of realising the attendance of the full complement of the history team at departmental meetings should be explored.
 - The subject department plan should be further developed.
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INTRODUCTION

St. John's College De La Salle is a voluntary, secondary school for boys with a current enrolment of 408 students. The school is under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Trust and participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. Students are offered the Junior Certificate programme, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied. Transition Year (TY) is not provided.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed. Classroom management was uniformly good.
- Most teachers informed their students of the lesson topic or the purpose of the lesson at the outset. Informing students of the intended learning outcomes occurred less frequently. It is, therefore, recommended that consistent departmental practice be maintained in this regard.
- The teachers' interactions with their students during the lessons included exposition, questioning and informative comment. Questioning as an interactive learning strategy was most effective where it included directed, global, higher and lower-order questions and was not prolonged when undertaken.
- Visual resources such as information and communication technology (ICT) and the overhead projector and the class textbook were used well to provide the students with greater understanding and knowledge of their lesson topic. The usage of these resources enabled the teachers to emphasise important points and key words, to ask clearly focused questions about particular aspects of the subject of the lesson and to consolidate learning by reading selected, informative passages relating to the lesson topic. In one lesson the PowerPoint slides were often very detailed and the display of less printed information on the slides or the distribution of the information across a greater number of slides merited consideration.
- The setting of written assignments occurred in a number of lessons and provided an opportunity for students to consolidate their own learning. There was also scope in some lessons to explore pair work in completing the set task.
- The teachers' good practice of regularly setting and correcting homework and the inclusion of written, formative comments on students' assignments support the consolidation of learning beyond the classroom. The teachers' written, feedback comments are also a commendable means of providing students with clear directions as to how to improve the quality of their work.
- Student learning was guided and supported well throughout the lessons observed. The vast majority of students remained engaged, attentive and responsive to their teachers. Copybooks and folders contained neat work that reflected a good standard of application to assigned tasks.
- The positive learning atmosphere of the lessons visited and the variety of methodologies employed supported the development of the students' literacy skills.

- The teachers keep well informed about the progress of their students through noting their participation in class lessons, their application to their coursework and their achievements in class tests and formal examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- History is a core subject for all junior cycle students and is available as an optional subject choice for students pursuing the established Leaving Certificate and the LCVP.
- The weekly timetabled allocation of history lesson periods is strongly supportive of the subject. First-year students have four periods per week, second and third-year students have five periods each week and senior cycle history students have six periods per week. However, some junior cycle classes have a majority of their history lessons in the afternoon and it is recommended that such anomalies in the distribution of the weekly history lessons be avoided.
- The six members of the history team are all deployed to teach history. However, some history teachers have been deployed to teach only one class group in the current academic year. It is recommended that, where practicable, the teachers be deployed to teach more than one class group in order to enable them to maintain more frequently recurring contact with the full extent of the history coursework and to provide greater opportunity for the teachers to be actively involved in teaching History.
- Management supports the continuous professional development (CPD) of all staff by organising whole-school CPD events. The attendance of history teachers at specialist in-service training is also accommodated.
- Management systematically records the achievements of the students in the formal school and certificate examinations. The students' results in the certificate examinations are compared to national norms and reported to the board of management. The board is thereby provided with an informed understanding of the students' attainment.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The history teachers work collaboratively to support the development of the teaching and study of History in the school. Their good practices are evidenced by the rotation of the position of the subject convenor, regular department meetings and the recorded business of the meetings, the shared electronic subject folder, and the subject department plan.
- The history department plan is in effect a framework policy document that outlines and informs the teaching and study of History in the school. By way of supporting the teachers' collaborative work and strengthening the subject plan it is recommended that the plan also include: a strategic development plan for History in the years ahead; a literacy and numeracy policy; details as to how teaching and learning are informed by the analysis of the students' examination results in the certificate examinations; and the agreed responsibilities of the history co-ordinator.
- The attendance of the full complement of the history team at departmental meetings can be difficult to realise for various reasons. This situation should be formally discussed and resolved by the team. It is also recommended that teaching and learning methodologies become a more regular item on the agenda of department meetings. In this regard the attention given at recent meetings to ICT is noted and commended.

- In keeping with good teaching practice, the teachers' preparations of the lessons observed ensured that each lesson had a definite focus and a structured development that incorporated the use of appropriate teaching methods and resources to support student learning.

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 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.