

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of History
REPORT**

**Killina Presentation Secondary School
Rahan, Tullamore, County Offaly
Roll number: 65630B**

Date of inspection: 8 May 2014



**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 of inspection	8 May 2014
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed.
- A range of effective methodologies was used to consolidate learning.
- The good quality of students' learning was attested to by their purposeful engagement with assigned tasks and input to the lessons.
- There is strong whole-school support and provision for History.
- The history teachers collaborate very well in their ongoing planning of the development of History in the school.
- A commendable range of history-related activities is organised by the history teachers for their students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- More widespread use should be made of higher-order questions during classroom interactions and greater input than was observed should be obtained from students during the review of the objectives at the end of the lesson.
 - The subject department plan should be developed further.
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INTRODUCTION

Killina Presentation Secondary School is a voluntary, co-educational, post-primary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The curricular programmes provided are the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). TY is optional. The school has a resource centre that caters for students diagnosed with Moderate General Learning Disability (MGLD). Currently, 454 post-primary students attend the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed.
- All lessons began with students being well informed about the purpose of the lesson and the intended learning objectives. The pace and structure of the lessons supported the achievement of the objectives well. However, more input from students should have been obtained during the reviews of the objectives observed at the end of lessons.
- The purposeful and supportive classroom atmosphere during the lessons was attested to by the range of effective methodologies used to engage students and to consolidate learning, and the teachers' affirmation of students for their efforts. This affirmation was also evidenced by the display of students' project work where teachers have their own base classrooms.
- Very good use was made of visual resources such as the digital projector and board in combination with teachers' interactions and note taking by students to increase students' knowledge of the lesson topic and to consolidate their understanding of relevant key concepts. Further, the focused attention given to well selected images in a number of lessons and the viewing of a short video clip in one lesson also effectively supported learning.
- The addressing of questions directly to named students and globally to the class enabled the teachers to guide and support learning well during the lessons. This was evident in the use made of questioning during activities such as the review of prior learning and the teachers' support for students' in ensuring their understanding of new material as the lesson progressed. It is recommended, however, that more widespread use be made of higher-order questions during classroom interactions.
- The active learning methodologies observed such as group work, pair work, note taking and the setting of an independent written task provided opportunities for students to assume greater responsibility for their learning. The purposeful manner in which students undertook their assigned tasks reflected the good quality of their learning. This was also demonstrated by their contributions at other times during the lessons.
- The development of students' literacy skills was supported well by the methodologies used during the lessons observed. Students' familiarisation with key words and concepts and opportunities to develop their oral and written skills were incorporated well into the planned development of the lessons.
- The history teachers assign and correct their students' written homework regularly. Very good examples were noted in respect of the practice of individual teachers in providing students with written formative comments to support students in maintaining improvement in their written work. However, more widespread consistency with regard to this commendable practice should be achieved within the history department.

- The good range of assessment modes used to monitor students' progress includes the teachers' analysis of students' attainment in History in the certificate examinations. Their analysis is used to inform subject planning and the annual setting of targets regarding students' attainment.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- History is a core subject for junior cycle and TY students and is offered to Leaving Certificate students as an elective subject choice. Students attending the resource centre study a history module as part of their curricular programme.
- The timetabled allocation and distribution of history lesson periods is supportive of the subject. The teaching and study of History is very well resourced.
- The three members of the history team are all deployed to teach History. Currently, all members teach Junior Certificate History and two history teachers are deployed to teach the TY and Leaving Certificate coursework. The teachers remain with the class groups to which they are assigned for the duration of their students' curricular programme, subject to the constraints of the timetable. These good practices enable the teachers to remain actively involved in the development of the subject in the school and to have uninterrupted teaching of the coursework to their students.
- School management encourages and facilitates the history teachers' attendance at whole-school and subject-specific continuing professional development events.
- Well established whole-school assessment and reporting procedures are in place. The school's assessment and homework policies also inform best practices in these regards throughout the school.
- School management is very supportive of the history teachers in organising history-related activities to develop their students' interest in the subject. Such activities have included the FÍS film project that was recently undertaken by TY students, who participated in the making of a short film that was based on elements of the U.S. history coursework that they had studied.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The history teachers engage in a very good level of collaborative planning. This is evident in their rotation of the position of subject co-ordinator, regular departmental meetings, annual reviews of the subject department plan and students' attainment in the certificate examinations, and the setting of a common summer examination for each of the first, second and fifth-year groups.
- The history teachers organise a commendable range of activities to stimulate their students' interest in History such as project work of which the aforementioned FÍS film project is one example, the first-year and TY tours to places of historical interest and talks by guest speakers.
- The progress made in relation to the recommendations of a previous inspection report in History provides further indication of effective planning by the history department. These included, for example, the documentation of a more detailed subject plan, which has been done. Effective subject planning is by its nature an ongoing activity. In this context it is

recommended that the subject plan also include copies of the history teachers' coursework plans as well as additional sections outlining how teachers' reflections on students' attainment in History in the certificate examinations informs classroom pedagogy, evaluation of the TY history coursework, how History is promoted in the school and areas for subject improvement.

- The individual lessons observed were all well planned. They incorporated a variety of effective methodologies and well selected resources to facilitate learning.

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.