

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Coláiste Phádraig CBS
Lucan, Co. Dublin
Roll number: 60264A

Date of inspection: 8 April 2014



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	7 and 8 April 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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- Very good engagement with primary historical sources such as film clips or quotes from key personalities was evident in most lessons.
- In all classroom visited teacher instruction was clear and well-delivered.
- Curricular provision for History is good for most year groups but is inadequate in third year.
- Teachers work collaboratively across a range of areas such as planning for improvement and planning for resource development, including ICT resources.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The learning intention of the lesson should be made clear at the lesson start and learning reviewed at the end of all lessons.
 - Homework should be set frequently in all cases and students should receive written feedback on paragraph or essay style questions.
 - An additional class period for third year students should be made available; this was also recommended in the history evaluation of 2006.
 - Common testing for junior cycle based on common schemes of work should take place.
-

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Phádraig is a boys' voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Edmund Rice Schools Trust (ERST). All junior cycle students study History. There is, at present, no history module in the optional Transition Year. History is available as an option to Leaving Certificate students. At the time of the evaluation there were 727 students enrolled.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good with some examples of excellent practice.
- A variety of teaching methodologies was used to advance the lessons. In two cases explicit intended learning outcomes were introduced at the beginning and used to structure the lesson and review learning at the end. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- In most lessons observed a number of transitions to introduce new resources or group or pair work ensured very good pace and timing and helped maintain student interest. In all lessons students had the opportunity to undertake independent learning in the form of individual, pair or group work. In a number of lessons students had many such opportunities. This is very good practice.
- Very good engagement with primary historical sources such as film clips or quotes from key personalities was evident in most lessons. Students were invited to discuss the sources in pairs and to make historical inferences from these. In this way there was very good development of higher-order historical thinking. This methodology is highly commended.
- In all classrooms visited instruction was clear and well-delivered and there was good use of questioning and guided discussion to advance the lesson. Students were comfortable asking and answering questions and students in many lessons contributed some very interesting questions or commentary. The use of “think, pair, share” questioning or “hands down” questioning was recommended in a few instances to involve more students in the learning process.
- Effective use of resources was evident. The board was well-used to introduce key vocabulary or graphic organisers such as mind-maps. There was also very good use of information and communications technology in every classroom visited and teachers had prepared PowerPoint, visuals and film clips to enrich student learning.
- The quality of student learning was very good in all cases and students engaged well with lesson material.
- Overall, the assessment of student work is of a good standard. Regular testing takes place. Students in most classrooms visited receive frequent homework and in these cases students receive formative feedback on longer pieces of written work. Students also get the opportunity to do project work and many examples of interesting historical models were displayed in classrooms. This project work is part of the formal assessment system. Another indicator of good practice is the use of continuous assessment in some cases.

- It was noted that common testing takes place in senior cycle, this is good practice. However, at junior cycle there is no agreement across the department in relation to common testing, the marks to be allocated to project work and continuous assessment.
- With regard to areas for development, teachers should assign frequent homework in all cases to include plenty of opportunity to undertake extended writing exercises throughout the year. Students should receive formative feedback on this work. The history department should agree assessment arrangements in relation to common testing, project work and continuous assessment. This should be detailed in a history department assessment policy which should be communicated to all teachers new to the department.
- Students generally achieve well in certificate examinations. Every effort should be made to convince students likely to achieve at higher level to take the higher level papers.
- Very good relations between teachers and students were evident. Lessons were taught in a stimulating learning environment with many examples of history posters, maps and student projects evident.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Curricular provision for Leaving Certificate students is good. These students have five periods of History per week.
- Curricular provision for first and second year students is satisfactory at three periods a week but inadequate for third year students who have only two periods of History per week. It is strongly recommended that in the next review of junior cycle provision that the school increases provision for third year history students to three periods per week as recommended in the history evaluation of 2006.
- History is, at present, not provided for in Transition Year although some trips to places of historical interest are arranged as part of the TY calendar activities. It is positive that the school plans to introduce a Gaelic Athletic Association (GAA) TY module in the next school year and to cover some of the history of the organisation as part of this module. This will contribute towards allowing students to sample a broader range of subjects at this level which accords with the recommendations of the TY programme evaluation of 2010.
- There are good arrangements for student access to optional subjects at Leaving Certificate in that the option bands are arranged according to student choice. History is a popular subject at this level with two class groups in every year. Members of the department promote the subject to prospective students by organising a talk at the open night and producing promotional material.
- Teachers are qualified to teach the subject and have availed of professional development opportunities. It is commendable that the school pays fees for membership of the subject association.
- Management is open to the purchase of resources. A history folder which has been made available on the school system, is an additional support for teachers. Members of the department have uploaded a vast range of relevant material onto this folder. This is highly commended as is teacher and student use of the open source learning platform Edmodo.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A co-ordinator is in place in the department and meetings take place regularly. Minutes of meetings are available.
- Subject department planning is advancing well. Teachers work collaboratively across a range of areas including planning for improvement. For example, teachers have introduced a project component and a mock archaeological dig at junior cycle in response to a student survey conducted by members of the department. This is good self-evaluative practice. It is recommended that the subject department plan should contain a short section on planning for improvement that documents the areas identified for improvement and agrees actions targeted at these areas.
- The subject department plan contains a range of documents including information on methodologies, strategies to help students with additional educational needs, an analysis of examination results and schemes of work for the subject. The schemes of work contain agreed time frames and intended learning outcomes per topic in line with good practice. This should be expanded to include suggested resources and assessment practices per topic.
- Agreed schemes of work should direct teaching and learning and form the basis for common assessment for each year group. It was noted that some teachers work independently of the department schemes of work and that common testing takes place in senior cycle only. This good practice should be extended to junior cycle. Discussions about teaching and learning and assessment which take place at department meetings should inform the annual revision of the schemes of work.
- Good planning for co-curricular activities, for example, the history trips for each year group was evident.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.