

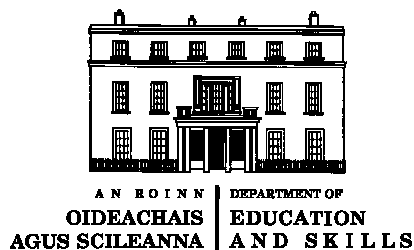
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of HISTORY
REPORT**

**Coláiste Bríde
Enniscorthy, County Wexford
Roll number: 63570W**

Date of inspection: 25 April 2016



REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HISTORY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	25 & 26 April 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students• Interview with subject coordinator	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- In most of the lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was very good or good; less satisfactory practice was noted in a small minority of lessons.
- Teacher-student rapport, interactions and general quality of teacher preparation were very good overall.
- Subject co-ordination, the emphasis on History activities and displays, and overall departmental planning and documentation are of an exceptionally high standard in History.
- Whole-school provision for History is very good, despite low timetable provision for Transition Year (TY) classes, and is enhanced by the provision of teacher-based classrooms.
- Provision for History in a number of option blocks on senior timetables is a good support to it and testimony to the positive profile of the subject at Leaving Certificate level.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To ensure consistently good teaching and learning practices, attention should be paid where necessary to teacher positioning and lesson pacing, lessening the use of textbook reading, interrogation of visual stimuli and use of more strategies to promote active learning among students.
 - Current timetable provision for History in TY is low and needs to be reviewed.
 - As time permits, some departmental discussion of agreed methodology and resources for a sample of junior cycle topics is recommended, to support common standards and depth of course coverage, for all junior class groups.
-

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Bríde is a girls' voluntary secondary school, under the trusteeship of Catholic Education: an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school serves a catchment area encompassing Enniscorthy itself and the town's hinterland. It has a current enrolment of 648, and curricular provision includes a TY option taken by most students, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The majority of observed lessons demonstrated a very satisfactory standard of teaching and good evidence of student learning, although less satisfactory practice was noted in one instance.
- In general, classroom layout supported teacher movement and student tasks, with print-rich environments in all rooms visited. Some good pair tasks were engaged in, sometimes supported by prompt cards or games, and the structured use of such active learning strategies merits ongoing development.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used well in most lessons to add a visual dimension to learning. Visual or video stimuli were generally very well utilised, with pre-teaching of important concepts relevant to syllabuses, pre-identification of key questions to be considered as students watched film clips, and high-quality analysis of issues like propaganda and perspective. This is good practice.
- Most lessons benefited from high levels of teacher explanation, and contextualization of History through analogies with modern life, local events, sport, music, television shows and a range of everyday issues which students were able to empathise with and understand.
- Some over-reliance on static textbook reading was observed in a small number of lessons. More engaging and challenging approaches are recommended in those contexts, to include questioning, more student interaction with visuals and graphs, and other activities.
- Some very good strategies were employed to deepen students' learning, including a walking debate used to encourage historical analysis among senior students, a diagram-labelling task and a card quiz, as well as the introduction of objects from daily life to encourage debate and help identify how people dealt with shortages in times past or appreciate local historical events.
- Pleasant teacher-student rapport and interactions, and the general quality of teacher preparation, all contributed to a positive classroom atmosphere in all lessons. It was nice to see many humorous moments and interactions in the lessons observed.
- The quality of teacher explanations, and syllabus relevance of the content covered was satisfactory in almost all lessons. Where students were due to sit Certificate examinations, teacher explanations appropriately included advice relevant to those examinations.
- Where teaching and learning was less than good, there was a clear need to improve teacher positioning, lesson pacing, analysis of visual stimuli and the use of more active learning strategies among students.
- In-class questioning was used very effectively, especially with senior students in order to elucidate viewpoints and develop historical argument. At optimum level, students were

positively encouraged to give their views on the impact of historical events and personages, backing them up with supporting evidence.

- Occasionally with younger students, more emphasis on higher-order questioning was required, to achieve a better balance with questioning focused on factual recall and to support deeper analysis.
- Assessment of student work was a feature of all lessons, carried out via oral correction of homework, some formative commentary in copybooks and marking of answers using pre-explained schemes based on Certificate examinations.
- In some lessons, an excellent emphasis on subject-specific vocabulary and on developing students' critical literacy skills was evident.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetable provision for History is very good in almost every year group, particularly given the improved provision of three periods per week for all junior classes.
- Timetable provision for TY History is low, at just two periods per week for ten weeks, and this marginal position of History in TY needs to be reviewed as soon as possible.
- Provision of History in a number of option blocks on senior timetables is a good support to it. There are very good uptake levels in the subject at Leaving Certificate level, where it has a high profile.
- The overall assessment policy at the school includes the setting of common tests, and appropriate arrangements for facilitating and storing students' coursework. Agreeing and establishing consistent formative assessment practices merits ongoing attention.
- History is very well provided for, including through library and electronic resources, supports for trips, very impressive displays based on local and school history, and comprehensive school engagement with 2016 Proclamation Day activities.
- Continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities have been proactively accessed at subject coordinator level but less so among teachers who have little timetabled History. This needs to be addressed as time permits, in the long-term interests of the department.
- Management has stated a desire to support CPD opportunities for all department members. This is commendable, and should include active engagement with the History Teachers Association of Ireland by all department members where possible, even by rotating representation if necessary.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of the subject department folder, and level of engagement with a range of plans, policies and activities relevant to History is a credit to the subject coordinator.
- Department meetings are well minuted and record very good collaborative planning for historical trips, resources and a commendable recent focus on a comprehensive 1916 commemoration event.
- As time permits, some departmental discussion of agreed methodology and resources, for a sample of junior cycle topics is recommended. This could be based on the department's

shared electronic folder and would help foster common departmental practice and support any student teachers or new department members over time.

- The department is particularly commended for its critical literacy policy, aimed at developing higher-order literacy and analytical skills among students of History. Its implementation was most evident in senior lessons.
- Individual teacher preparedness for lessons, including preparation of ICT-based and paper resources such as question templates and prompt questions, identification of learning intentions and links to homework tasks was very satisfactory.
- Teachers maintained good records of student attendance and performance, and there is commendable tracking of outcomes in Certificate examinations at departmental level.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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.

Published June 2016