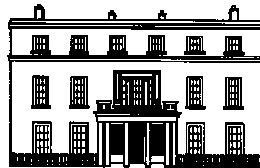


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of HISTORY**  
**REPORT**

**Coláiste Dún Iascaigh**  
**Cahir, County Tipperary**  
**Roll number: 76063D**

**Date of inspection: 24 November 2015**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	24 and 25 November 2015
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents and teachers' resource folders</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li><li>• Meeting with subject convenor</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation ranged from good to very good
- Lessons were characterised by positive teacher-student rapport and very clear teacher explanations of any difficult concepts
- Timetable provision and arrangements for student access to History are very satisfactory
- Some classrooms are rich in visual and verbal stimulus material, although others are not as conducive to lesson delivery in History
- Departmental planning and coordination are at a very high level, and the recent move to pool individual teachers' resources in electronic format is a further positive step
- Individual teacher preparation is good, with teachers maintaining very comprehensive sets of resources for classroom use.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Some lessons would benefit from a greater focus on student-centred learning strategies and wider use of visual resources
- In a minority of junior lessons, a stronger commitment to teacher marking of or commenting on assigned homework, particularly on lengthy tasks, is required
- The current practice of banding junior history classes ought to be reviewed and a mixed-ability alternative given serious consideration
- If practicable, delivery of history lessons in teacher-based classrooms would support teaching and learning considerably.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Dún Iascaigh is under the auspices of Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB). The school has an enrolment of 651 students, with slightly more boys than girls. It offers the Junior Certificate, Established Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Transition Year (TY) is optional, but popular.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation ranged from good to very good. Lessons were characterised by positive teacher-student rapport, very high standards of student behaviour and attention, relaxed and light-hearted interactions.
- Some lessons began with initial enquiry questions, or the stages of the proposed lesson were presented on the board margin. These ideas worked well and could be broadened to full learning intentions, to further support formative assessment and lesson structuring. In general, lesson pacing was good, allowing time for recapitulation before lessons ended.
- Teachers gave very clear explanations of challenging concepts, and drew very good analogies between historical and modern issues, to aid student understanding. Among these were the origins of towns, parallels between ancient and modern civilizations, and several examples drawn from local history, politics and current affairs.
- In lesson development, short word games were used to review previous learning, or a map or short documentary films were used to prompt questions and reflection. Such stimuli, when linked to questioning, were effective and worth employing more often, especially with groups of varying ability and aptitude.
- Seating arrangements and sometimes tight spaces did not suit active learning strategies. When encouraged, students readily formed groups and used placemats to record their work, talked actively about tasks and reported in detail, with confidence. Sorting and cloze tasks were also used to good effect, as students worked in pairs. Some lessons would have benefited from earlier or more use of such approaches.
- Teachers recognised students' special or language needs using some differentiated resources and showed a good awareness of issues like girls needing extra encouragement if in a minority. The banding of class groups in junior cycle appears to have a negative effect on the engagement and confidence of some students, and a move towards mixed-ability settings is recommended.
- Oral correction of home tasks was done well, and included some peer correction. Very valuable formative commentary was given on senior students' written work in particular. In a minority of junior lessons, a stronger commitment to teacher marking or commenting on assigned lengthy homework tasks is required.
- In general, lessons contained a good mix of higher-order and lower-order questioning, especially where causation and consequence were explored with volunteers and non-volunteers alike. Some interesting ways of selecting respondents were employed, notably a 'snowball' game with a younger group. Getting students to come to the board and write their ideas or give oral feedback from group tasks, were valuable for building confidence too. The quality of students' answers in all lessons was good.
- Literacy was supported by a department-wide focus on key words. Teachers are keenly aware of the gaps that sometimes exist between students' written and oral language skills.

Keywords could also incorporate terms and concepts that facilitate historical discussion, while student note-making is also worthy of further development, asking students to reflect and discern what is important rather than transcribing notes. It was good to see timelines and number lines used in several lessons, supporting numeracy and understanding.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- There is very good timetable provision for History across all year groups. It is good to see that History has been restored in TY in recent years, and again provision is satisfactory.
- Arrangements for student access to History are very good. The subject is a core one in junior cycle, offered in two core modules across TY and in an open choice in fifth and sixth year where uptake levels are good.
- From the evidence emerging in History, management is strongly encouraged to review the current practice of banding in second and third year, and to consider mixed-ability settings for delivery of junior cycle History, among other subjects.
- Whole-school resourcing and support for the history department is very good. However, the current mix of teacher-based and floating classrooms merits reconsideration, if resources permit. Classrooms within individual teachers' control were more conducive to teaching and learning, with print and visually rich environments and storage facilities.
- The school facilitates regular tests and reporting to parents. Teachers' record keeping of student progress is very good.
- There is very good information and communication technology (ICT) provision in the school. The history department has recently undertaken to pool some individual resources onto a common folder. This is positive.
- The school has a good complement of history teachers, and the coordinator in particular has maintained excellent links with the History Teachers' Association of Ireland and with the Professional Development Service for Teachers.
- The recent establishment of designated staff teams, focused on areas like teaching and learning, and mentoring, is very positive. The latter could be used to promote pooling of resources and ideas, and peer mentoring, with a view to dispersing responsibility and ensuring the long-term staffing capacity for teaching History up to Leaving Certificate.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The history department maintains very comprehensive records, a very thorough subject plan and all its teachers presented a huge array of resources. It organises historical trips to places like Belfast, Wexford and Dublin, and links with local historians, archaeologists and Tipperary Museum, to very good effect.
- History coordination work has been exceptional, driven by a volunteer convenor who is very open to rotating this role. Given the culture of shared responsibility already within the department, rotating coordination duties would be a further means of strengthening capacity and experience.
- Comprehensive yearly plans have been developed, and the restoration of TY offers an opportunity to build more content and local focus into this plan too. The current banding

system has militated against common pace of course coverage in second year or having common tests after first year. This supports revising the current model of class formation.

- Individual preparation of lesson outlines and resources by teachers has been very good. In all lessons observed, advance preparation of paper and ICT resources was evident.

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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 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.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

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

The Coláiste is in the process of moving to teacher based classrooms for the start of the next academic year.

The Coláiste will also place all students taking History in mixed ability groupings for the next academic year.