Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Coláiste Cois Life
Lucan
Co. Dublin
Roll number: 76065H

Date of inspection: 26 September 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HISTORY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>30 September 2011</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</td>
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<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- A uniformly high standard of teaching and learning was noted in lessons observed.
- Effective use of information and communications technology (ICT), active learning methodologies and inclusive and differentiated questioning contributed in a positive way to student learning.
- Very good classroom management supported by high quality individual planning for lessons meant that a very good classroom atmosphere was evident in all lessons.
- Very good emphasis on assessment was in evidence including frequent homework and testing, project work and common house examinations.
- An effective, hardworking team of teachers collaborate well to facilitate the delivery of the curriculum in the school. Members of the team are commended for the very good range of relevant professional development activities undertaken.
- Whole-school support for the subject is good including curricular provision, timetabling, the provision of resources and the range of co-curricular activities available.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To facilitate the storage and sharing of ICT resources a history folder and subfolders should be placed on the school system and teachers are encouraged to upload resources to these folders on a regular basis.
- The current arrangement for Transition Year (TY) History should be kept under review to ensure that as wide a range of students as possible get the opportunity to sample History in TY.
- Team members should ensure that medium and long-term planning for the subject and discussions about teaching and learning, including resources for different parts of the course, take place at subject department meetings.
INTRODUCTION
Coláiste Cois Life is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of County Dublin Vocational Educational Committee. Irish is the main language of instruction. At present 419 students are enrolled in the school. History is core at junior cycle and it is presently available as an option to TY students. It is also offered as an option to senior cycle students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
• A high standard of teaching was observed in classrooms visited. All lessons had a clear focus and learning outcomes were communicated to students at the start of lessons.
• Very good teaching methodologies were in use in lessons inspected including active learning methodologies. Students were given the opportunity to work independently or in pairs in every lesson observed.
• Very good use was made of effective questioning methodologies to ensure that all students were included and that high quality learning was taking place.
• Classroom management was very good in all instances. Good pupil-teacher rapport was in evidence. A secure and supportive learning environment has been created in every classroom visited.
• Effective use was made of resources in classrooms visited to support student learning. Very good use of visuals was noted.
• Very good use of ICT was in evidence in every lesson observed including high quality PowerPoints and a film clip. This contributed to student enjoyment and helped consolidate learning.
• In many instances there was good emphasis on the expansion of student vocabulary. This is particularly important in a school in which the language of tuition is not always the language of the home.
• In one instance the teacher noted the key vocabulary on the board as the lesson progressed. This good strategy merits wider use. The distribution of relevant word banks was also suggested as a means to differentiate the lesson for students experiencing difficulty.
• Very good assessment strategies are in place such as frequent homework, regular testing and project work. Commendably, common testing takes place for non-exam classes. Teachers use formative assessment strategies to give students feedback on their work.
• Good outcomes are in place in certificate examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT
• Curricular provision for certificate examination classes is very good. Junior Certificate students have three class periods per week. Leaving Certificate students have six class periods per week.
• Timetabling for the subject is appropriate.
• New arrangements are in place this year in relation to history provision for TY students. History is no longer studied by the whole TY cohort. Instead about one third of the cohort
study History and they are allocated four class periods a week for the full year which is satisfactory.

- The decision to make History optional was taken after a process of consultation with teachers and students and was designed to meet the particular needs of this year group. This shows a good level of reflective practice within the school and department.

- Ideally, all TY students should be given the opportunity to sample History in TY to allow students the opportunity to experience History at senior level and to experience some measure of self-directed historical research. It is thus recommended that the present arrangement in relation to TY History is regularly monitored and reviewed to ensure that it does not impact negatively on the subject uptake at Leaving Certificate level.

- There are very good arrangements in place to ensure student access to the subject at Leaving Certificate level. Students are given an open choice of all subjects and option bands are then created to ensure that the maximum amount of students get the optional subjects of their choice.

- There is very good provision of resources, including ICT resources. It is recommended that hard copy resources are catalogued and the catalogue included in the history subject folder. With regard to ICT resources it is recommended that a history folder with subfolders is placed on the school network and that teachers upload electronic files onto this folder as they are created.

- There is an effective hard-working history team in place. Established members of the team have undertaken a wide range of professional development activities, many in their own time. This is praiseworthy. Very good induction for new members of the team was also evident.

- It is positive that a homework and assessment policy has been created. Teachers professional practices adhere to the arrangements outlined in the policy including peer and self-assessment practices. This is praiseworthy.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- There is good department planning in place. Formal and informal meetings between teachers take place regularly. A coordinator has been appointed. Minutes for meetings are available.

- Teachers collaborate often in regard to a range of issues including common examinations and resources. Good planning for co-curricular activities including historical trips was evident.

- The subject department folder contains an effective department plan with good emphasis on collaborative assessment practices. An interesting and wide-ranging plan for TY is in place.

- To progress this good planning further it is recommended that medium and long-term planning for the subject is also addressed at department meetings.

- It is also recommended that teaching and learning in the subject is discussed at department meetings, to include suitable methodologies, resources and assessment for different parts of the course and that this is fed back into the department plan.
• Teachers presented individual planning documentation of a very high quality to the inspector. Planning for resources is exceptionally good. Teachers are highly commended for producing a very good range of resources to support their teaching.

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.

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