

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of History
REPORT**

**Kylemore College
Kylemore Road, Dublin 10
Roll number: 70240P**

Date of inspection: 25 October 2011



**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(s) of inspection	24-25 October 2011
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 in the lessons observed.
- A variety of effective teaching and learning methodologies were observed.
- The development of the students' literacy skills was supported in all lessons.
- The assessment and tracking of the student's progress are undertaken by management and the history teachers.
- History is taught and studied in a supportive whole-school context.
- The collaboration of the history teachers strongly supports the development of the subject.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Management should consider the introduction of a combined History-Geography module in Transition Year (TY) in order to strengthen the contact that senior cycle students have with History and to avoid the interrupted contact that occurs under the current biennial arrangement for the provision of the subject in TY.
- The history department plan should be further developed.
- The template used for coursework plans should include specific sections on methodologies and learning outcomes.

INTRODUCTION

Kylemore College is a voluntary, co-educational secondary school that provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), TY, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses. The school, which participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools scheme (DEIS), is under the patronage of the City of Dublin Vocational Educational Committee (CDVEC) and has a current enrolment of 272 post-primary students. TY is mandatory.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very good quality teaching and learning was much in evidence during the lessons observed. The teachers employed a variety of teaching and learning methodologies to meet their students' needs. Classroom management was uniformly good. The students remained attentive and engaged.
- In keeping with good teaching practice the teachers informed their students of the lesson topic at the start of the lesson or at a predetermined point during the initial phase of the lesson. The learning outcomes were also explicitly stated at the outset of some lessons. In a number of lessons the learning outcomes could have been more clearly identified at the start of the lesson, although they did emerge as the lessons progressed.
- There was very good interaction with the students throughout the lessons to enhance and gauge learning. For example, teacher exposition, questioning that included recapping on prior learning and the highlighting of key words were used effectively to set the context for the study of the lesson topic.
- There was very good use of visual resources such as video clips, PowerPoint slides and the board to increase the students' knowledge of their lesson topic. Again, the teachers' interaction with their students enhanced the effectiveness of these resources as did the setting of a worksheet assignment in two lessons that the students were required to complete while they viewed the video clip(s) shown to them. The board was used effectively by individual teachers to note and emphasise key points and words that emerged during these activities and at other times in the lessons.
- Directed reading from the textbook was incorporated into the planned development of some lessons and supported students in gaining an informed understanding of the subject of their study. The use of this resource was most effective where the material being read retained the interest of the students.
- The development of the students' literacy skills was supported in all lessons by the methodologies employed such as the strong emphasis that was placed on familiarising the students with the key words that were relevant to their lesson. There was however, some scope to make greater use of higher order questions and to explore the use of pair work or group work.
- The very good quality of student learning was evidenced by their engagement and participation in the lessons. The students' copybooks that were reviewed also contained good quality, neat work. The regular correction of the students' assignments and the provision of written, constructive feedback comments were noted. Where scope remains for the further development of succinct affirming comments such as "Good" these should be elaborated upon in order to further encourage and motivate students to sustain ongoing improvement in their work.

- The teachers remain well informed about the progress of their students through classroom observation and interaction, homework correction, the recording of students' attainment of their JCSP target statements where applicable, and the students' results in class tests and the formal school and certificate examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- History is provided on an alternating year basis with Geography in the school's junior and senior cycle programmes. In order to strengthen the contact that senior cycle students have with History it is recommended that management considers the introduction of a combined TY History-Geography module instead of the present biennial arrangement.
- The timetabled allocation of history class periods and the deployment of the history teachers are supportive of the subject. The teachers assigned to a first-year history class maintain continuity of contact with the class until the students complete their Junior Certificate History examination. Moreover, team teaching is currently being provided for one first-year class group in order to meet the needs of the students.
- The history teachers have a range of resources at their disposal such as information and communication technology (ICT), supplementary teaching materials, a history notice board, the school's library and a shared, electronic, subject department folder.
- Management supports the professional development and collaborative work of the history teachers. The organisation of outings to places of historical interest for the students is also facilitated.
- Management records, analyses and compares the achievements of the students in the formal school and certificate examinations to national norms.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The very good collaborative work of the history teachers is evidenced by the rotation of the position of subject convenor among them, the regular organisation and minuting of departmental meetings and the subject department plan.
- The subject department plan strongly reflects the commendable collaboration of the history teachers. For example, the plan details the aims and objectives of the history department, the agreed coursework plans, the proactive role of the department in relation to the attainment of the literacy targets in the school's DEIS plan, and the progress to be realised by the history department in the current academic year, 2011-2012. By way of supporting the further development of the plan it is recommended that details be included regarding the agreed responsibilities of the subject convenor, the supportive mentoring practices provided for post-graduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) students, and elucidation of the trends noted in the analysis of the students' achievements in the certificate examinations and how the trends inform the teaching and study of History.
- The template that is currently being used to plan the delivery of the coursework should be expanded to include information about the methodologies employed in teaching each coursework topic and the learning outcomes to be achieved. The main aspects of the topics should also be indicated where this has been overlooked.
- Careful planning that included the preparation of supplementary resources was undertaken for the lessons observed.

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 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.

The Advisory Sub-Committee, Principal and history teachers welcome this very positive report and consider it to be an accurate evaluation of the quality and teaching of History in Kylemore College. We are delighted that the variety of methodologies and development of students' literacy skills have been recognised and affirmed also.

The Advisory Sub-Committee, Principal and teachers wish to acknowledge the courteous and professional manner in which the subject inspection was conducted.

The Advisory Sub-Committee and Principal wish to commend the History Department for their continued hard work and commitment to their students and the school.

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 history teachers have welcomed the recommendations of the inspector. The following actions have been taken since the evaluation:

A combined historical and geographical studies programme is planned for Transition Year in September 2012.

Consideration has been given to further developing the History Department Plan.

A new template has been designed and is to be used for coursework plans, providing more specific details on methodologies and learning outcomes. This will result in further unpacking of the history curriculum.