

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

**Subject Inspection of History  
REPORT**

**Coláiste Mhuire  
Bóthar Ráth Tó  
Baile Átha Cliath 7  
Roll Number: 60450U**

**Date of inspection: 4 October 2012**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

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| <b>Date of inspection</b>   | 4 October 2012   |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul> |

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very high.
- Each lesson was very well structured, classroom management was very effective and a good rapport was evident between students and teachers.
- The history department is highly commended for assembling history resources of a very high standard in the past couple of years.
- The curricular provision is extremely satisfactory for the subject and the extra-curricular provision is also very good.
- There is a very good emphasis on the professional development of teachers in the school.
- Planning in the department is excellent.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The students should have the opportunity to undertake self-directed work individually or in groups in lessons to help them engage with the subject.
  - If students are asked to go back on the work of the day as homework, a small written task should be included in order to consolidate the students' understanding of the subject.
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## INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Mhuire is an all-Irish co-educational school under the patronage of ERST (Edmund Rice Schools Trust). The programmes available in the school are the Junior Certificate, Transition Year and the established Leaving Certificate. There are 213 students enrolled for the current school year. Every student studies History in the Junior Certificate and in the compulsory Transition Year. History is available as an option in the Leaving Certificate programme.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very high. In the majority of lessons the practice was exemplary.
- Each lesson was very well-structured. In each case the learning outcomes were clearly presented to the students.
- At the start of each lesson observed the teachers spent a few minutes going back on previous learning. This is good practice. There was a high standard of questioning and all students had the opportunity to participate.
- In some lessons the enquiry method was used to present the content of the lesson to the students. This practice is highly commended.
- In each case classroom management was of a very high standard and it was obvious that there was a very good rapport between students and teachers.
- Opportunities were provided for students to be active in their learning, including individual work, group work and pair work. In one classroom the teacher divided the students into groups and very good use was made of a game to consolidate the students' knowledge of life aboard ship in the fifteenth century. This game encouraged the students to focus on the content of the lesson in a very enjoyable and effective way.
- In one lesson the students spent time taking down notes from the board. Such a task has merit but there should be a balance between such work and self-directed work which gives the students an independent opportunity to engage with the subject.
- There was good emphasis on literacy in the classrooms visited. There was very good use of the board and of PowerPoint presentations to present difficult phrases and words to the students. Each student had a copy of *Téarmaí Staire* on the desk and there was evidence of regular small tests of history terminology. Each teacher spent a little time explaining and emphasising the lesson's keywords. This is commendable.
- To add to the good work being done it is recommended that the lesson keywords be left at the side of the board and that the students are encouraged to note them down in their copybooks during the lesson.
- Good resources were used in the classes. For example, in a couple of lessons a very high standard PowerPoint presentation was used to progress the lesson topic.
- Maps of Europe and the World should be provided for each room in which History is taught. It is recommended that these maps and diagrams should be referred to as appropriate to clarify the lesson content.
- The history teachers place a good emphasis on assessment. Homework is assigned regularly and corrected in accordance with Assessment for Learning strategies. In a couple of lessons observed the teacher advised the students to revise the class work as

homework. It is recommended that a small written task be added to this type of homework to focus the students' attention on the lesson's terms and content and to consolidate learning.

- It was clear that there was excellent preparation ongoing for the state examinations. Marking criteria are shared with the students. This is good practice.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOLSUPPORT**

- The curricular provision for the subject is very satisfactory. Class periods are thirty-five minutes long. Each Leaving Certificate class has six history periods, each Transition Year class has four periods, third years have five periods, and first and second years have four history periods.
- The extra-curricular provision is also very good. For example, first year students go on a trip to Newgrange.
- The arrangements for student access to the subject are very satisfactory. The students have an open choice of optional subjects for the Leaving Certificate programme and the bands are created based on the students' choices.
- The provision of resources is very good. There is effective equipment for information and communications technology (ICT) in the school and it is widely used. Class-sets of textbooks have been made available as an additional resource. There is a history folder on the school's electronic system. The teachers are highly commended for having created many of their own resources. On the day of the inspection the school submitted to the inspector six large folders of very high quality resources written by the teachers.
- There is a very good emphasis on the professional development of teachers in the school and the coordinator has attended HIST in-service training. The department members are members of the History Teachers' Association of Ireland and the school pays the fees. The peer observation which is part of the school's practice is highly commended.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- It was clear that excellent planning is in place in the department. A coordinator has been appointed and regular meetings are held and the minutes of meetings are available.
- There was evidence of medium-term and long-term planning. For example, the results of the certificate examinations are analysed and the department's aim is to increase the number of students taking the Higher Level paper in the Junior Certificate examination.
- The subject plan is of a very high standard. In the folders the work schemes are set out in the form of lessons with a lesson plan, worksheets and a PowerPoint presentation prepared in advance for nearly every lesson.
- It is commendable that the history department has a homework policy. It should be reviewed to ensure that students are given enough practice of written work as homework.
- There is a very interesting programme set out for Transition Year with very high quality resources created for it.

- It was clear that the history teachers work effectively together. They follow the same work schemes and they provide common examinations of a very high standard twice a year.

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

*Published January 2013*

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

This report has been examined by the members of the board of management of Coláiste Mhuire. The board would like to thank the Inspector for her professionalism during the inspection. The school is encouraged by the positive findings in the 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 entire teaching staff is aware of the recommendations and the implementation of the recommendations has already commenced.

1. Home work: (i) The team is aware that an emphasis should be placed on written work; (ii) If students are asked to review their work, a *written task* should be included to consolidate learning; (iii) At a staff meeting, it will be recommended to every subject department that the homework policy of the department be reviewed.
2. Self-Directed Learning: It was recommended in the report that students should be encouraged to undertake self-directed learning, as individuals or in groups, during lessons. While this is already happening to some extent, the topic of self-directed learning will be discussed at staff meetings to ensure that every teacher understands how this can be undertaken effectively.
3. Keywords: Every member of staff has been asked to list keywords on the whiteboard during lessons. School management has also recommended that there be regular testing of keywords in line with the literacy strategy of the school.

*This is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management.*