

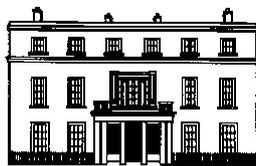
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of History  
REPORT**

**St. Paul's Secondary School  
Monasterevin  
Co. Kildare  
Roll number:61702D**

**Date of inspection: 22 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**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	22 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 four 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 in lessons observed was generally good with some very good lessons in evidence.
- Overall, lessons were well-structured with well-chosen resources and effective teacher questioning evident.
- Very good provision is made for students with additional educational needs, including additional lessons for some students, effective use of keyword strategies and very good use of visuals.
- Whole-school support for the subject is very good. This is reflected in the satisfactory level of curricular provision, the support for teachers' engagement with their subject association and the facilitation of frequent well-structured subject department meetings.
- Subject department planning is effective and individual teacher planning for lessons was very good.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There should be an appropriate balance between teacher input and student activity in lessons.
- Students should be given frequent opportunity to undertake extended writing assignments such as paragraph or essay-style questions.
- Teachers should download the very good history electronic resources created onto a history folder on the school electronic system.

## **INTRODUCTION**

St. Paul's Secondary School is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. History is a core subject in junior cycle and is available as an option at Leaving Certificate level. All students study History in the optional Transition Year (TY) programme. At the time of the evaluation there were 303 post-primary students enrolled. The school is included in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) action plan.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was generally good with some very good lessons in evidence.
- Individual teacher planning was very good. All lessons were well-structured with very good pace and timing evident in most instances.
- In some lessons teachers shared the learning outcomes with students and made time for review at the end. These good practices should be extended to all lessons.
- Revision of prior learning took place at the start of all lessons. An effective feature of all lessons was a very good starter activity that served to spark student interest and to set a very good tone for the lesson.
- Resources were well-chosen including very interesting use of film. In most cases teachers set aside time to process the film clips with students. This is good practice.
- High quality PowerPoint presentations, with good use of visual material, and the classroom board were also used to advance the lesson. Very good use of visuals was evident. In one lesson observed very interesting use of "show-me" boards combined with pair work brought interest and variety to the lesson.
- Good attention to key word strategies was evident in all lessons observed in line with the school's DEIS priorities. Students should be encouraged to note down key words as was the case in some lessons observed.
- In some lessons there was a good balance between teacher talk and student activity. In other lessons the teacher voice predominated. Students should be encouraged to be active in lessons and independent or collaborative learning opportunities should be provided.
- The quality of student learning was good as evidenced by student answering and engagement with the lesson. High quality inclusive questioning was evident in many instances. The judicious use of "wait time" would have given opportunities for the more reticent students to formulate an answer in some cases.
- A number of different modes of assessment were used including common monthly testing. Very high quality project work was evident in one first year class where the teacher gave students useful feedback on how to improve their work. Frequent homework is given across the department. Teachers correct this homework regularly.
- In many cases homework consisted of short-answer type questions. Students should also be given practice at writing paragraph-style questions such as the "People in History" type questions at junior certificate level or paragraph/essay style questions in senior cycle. In some instances it may be necessary to scaffold students' writing with a word-frame or an outline plan until students grow in confidence.

- In one instance students wrote summaries of chapters of the textbook as a regular homework assignment. This type of assignment can be difficult for students and should be replaced with the type of assignments outlined above.
- It is recommended that the work of third year and sixth year students be corrected using certificate examination criteria. It is also recommended that criteria are shared with students and that students are given helpful feedback on how to improve their work.
- A review of student journals indicated that some students are not writing down their homework in their journals. Teachers should regularly check that this is being done.
- Classroom management was good with good relations between teachers and students evident.
- Classrooms had good ICT equipment and subject specific material was evident on classroom walls.

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

- Curricular provision for the subject is very good. There are three periods per week in junior cycle, two in Transition Year and five periods per week for leaving certificate classes. In most cases timetabling for the subject is very good.
- There are good arrangements for student access to the subject in senior cycle with students being offered an open choice of optional subjects. Option bands are then created to maximise students' choice. Unusually, History has been offered against French for the last two years but the school has been accommodating and creative in regard to students wishing to do both subjects and hopes to change the banding arrangements in the next school year.
- There is good provision of resources for the subject and teachers have created and downloaded a number of electronic resources. A history folder should be placed on the school server and history resources should be downloaded to this folder.
- Very good provision is made for students with additional educational needs, including the exceptionally able, such as additional lessons for some students, effective use of keyword strategies and very good use of visuals.
- Teachers are appropriately qualified and are involved in their subject association. It is commendable that the school pays subject association fees for teachers.
- There is very good emphasis on student attainment in the school. There are monthly reports home, common testing twice a year and each department considers an analysis of results prepared by management.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A coordinator has been appointed and regular well-structured department meetings are facilitated by management.
- Members of the department are reflective and dedicated to the interests of their students.

- The department plan is of good quality with good attention to planning for literacy and numeracy and the needs of different types of learners.
- The schemes of work are not at present laid out per term and a section on resources and methodologies is separate to the schemes of work. In time, the schemes should be developed so that the topics to be studied are laid out termly, with proposed learning outcomes and suggested resources and methodologies for the topics presented. This will facilitate common planning for the subject.
- An interesting programme for a combined history, geography and philosophy module is studied in TY. The planning documentation should be expanded to include more detail on topics covered, resources and methodologies used.
- It is recommended that the department develop an action plan for improvement at the beginning of each school year and implement strategies to reach agreed targets.
- Very good planning for extra and co-curricular activities was evident including historical re-enactments with the local historical society.

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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 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 March 2013.*

# Appendix

## School response to the report

### Submitted by the Board of Management

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

The Board of Management of St Paul's Secondary School welcomes this report by the Inspectorate. The experienced advice and recommendations provided by the inspector give further guidance to the History teachers and will enhance the provision of this subject.

It is evident to the Board from this report that the work of the history teachers and the history department is focused on improving teaching and learning and we thank them sincerely for their collective endeavours. The report notes very good individual planning, innovative classroom practices and the use of ICT resources and this is most encouraging. The Board notes that some homework assignments and revision practices require further development.

The continued support of school management for the history department is obvious and highly commendable. Procedurally subjects at Leaving Certificate are banded according to student's preferences, therefore, the option band for history in future years will depend on student's choices.

#### **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 Board of Management of St Paul's Secondary School welcomes the recommendations in the report.

The following actions have been taken since the initial inspection:

A central folder has been established on the school network and the history teachers have uploaded their own resources to this folder for easy sharing.

Higher order questions are now a weekly assignment for fifth and sixth year history students.

The history department plan has further divided each year's schemes of work into work per term.

The following actions are planned to address other recommendations:

School management will place plans for improvement for history and each subject in the beginning of year subject department agenda in 2013-14.

The Transition Year history subject descriptor will be amended to reflect the cross curricular nature of this module.

In 2013-14 the practice of assigning higher order questions will be extended to all years in the school.