

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

**Subject Inspection of History**  
**REPORT**

**Luttrellstown Community College,**  
**Clonsilla, Dublin 15**  
**Roll number: 76130P**

**Date of inspection: 15 October 2013**



**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>	14 and 15 October 2013
<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 seven class periods.</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching was very good in lessons observed.
- In all lessons observed students had the opportunity to be active, either through the use of questioning or, as in many lessons, the use of cooperative learning methodologies such as group work or pair work.
- Effective questioning was a feature of almost all lessons which led to good student learning.
- Good assessment for the subject was evident including regular well-monitored homework, frequent testing and project work.
- Curricular provision for History is very good in the school, students have open access to the subject in senior cycle and resources of a very high quality were available on the school's intranet system.
- A collaborative, reflective, proactive team of teachers is involved in delivering the subject.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Questioning should be inclusive of all students and should help develop students' critical thinking skills.
  - A history department homework policy should be prepared to guide teachers in preparing students for internal and external assessment.
  - The history plan should be expanded to include long-term planning for the subject, targets should be set in areas identified for development, and actions agreed to reach those targets.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Luttrellstown Community College is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of the Dublin Dun Laoghaire Education Training Board. History is core in junior cycle. Transition Year (TY) is optional in the school and all TY students study History. History is available as an option to Leaving Certificate students. At the time of the evaluation there were 428 students enrolled.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of teaching was very good in lessons observed.
- Pupil-teacher relations were very respectful and classroom management was very effective.
- Lessons were taught in modern, well-lit rooms with good ICT facilities and a print-rich environment.
- Lessons were generally well-structured. All lessons started with either the introduction of the topic of the lesson or the proposed learning outcomes. Where this was most effective the learning outcomes were presented clearly and slowly. In most lessons teachers concluded the lesson with a short review of learning.
- Some lessons commenced with a review of prior learning or an interesting starter activity, For example, in one lesson on the Bronze Age students were asked in pairs to recall their prior knowledge of the period.
- In all lessons observed students had the opportunity to be active, either through the use of questioning or, as in many lessons, the use of cooperative learning methodologies such as group work or pair work. In a number of lessons students were afforded a number of such opportunities and the teacher acted as facilitator of learning. This is very good practice,
- In a few lessons group or pair work could have been more focused, with clearer instructions and a strict time limit evident and a shorter time allocated for group feedback to help maintain students' attention; for example, accepting only the key points from groups and not allowing repetition of points already made.
- Teachers had prepared a good range of resources in most cases, including PowerPoint presentations, film clips and worksheets. The use of historical documents including photographs was notable in both senior and junior cycle lessons.
- Teachers, however, are advised that when a resource is prepared that active consideration be given to how students will use it, as inadequate use of good resource material was seen in a few lessons. For example, if a film clip is used teachers should allow students some time to process the clip.
- To cater for visual and active learners it is useful to have resources beyond just the textbook.
- Good student questioning was a feature of almost all lessons. Some very innovative questioning methodologies were evident such as "wait time", "hands down questioning" and the random selection of students using lollipop sticks inscribed with students' names. Very good open-ended questioning in many lessons contributed to the development of critical thinking as was the case in one senior-cycle lesson on Fascism. In some cases this

was combined with pair work. This meant than all students had the opportunity to develop their thinking.

- In a minority of lessons the teachers' voice was to the fore and only lower level questioning was used with students giving only one word or one sentence answers. In these lessons some students answered multiple questions while others answered none and it was noted that student engagement and participation was not as good. In these cases it was recommended that questioning be developed as outlined above.
- Teachers showed good awareness of the importance of literacy and numeracy development. Students were asked to read aloud in many instances. There was an emphasis on key word strategies and timelines in many classrooms. These good strategies should be extended.
- It was clear that regular homework was a feature of all classrooms visited. Work is frequently corrected with good assessment for learning (AfL) strategies evident such as "three stars and a wish". Good use of information and communications technology (ICT) to collect and correct homework was noted.
- Teachers test students regularly and project work was also in evidence. TY History is developing year on year. However, it is recommended that assessment arrangements be decided upon in advance of the teaching of any new module.
- In this new school there have only been two sets of certificate examination results to date. Very good uptake of higher level papers was evident.

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

- There is satisfactory curricular provision for History in the school and there is good time provision for the subject in all programmes. It is commendable that all TY students study History.
- Timetabling is generally good apart from one third year class group that has two teachers for History.
- There are good arrangements for student access to the subject in senior cycle. Option bands are arranged on the basis of student choice.
- Management is open to the purchase of resources. A significant support for teachers is the history folder on the Z-drive on the school intranet system. Management and teachers are highly commended for making a range of resources available on this drive. Teacher use of *Edmodo*, a social learning platform, as a resource is also commended.
- It is suggested that a history notice-board in a prominent area of the school could be a good resource to further promote history in the school.
- Teachers in the department are well-qualified and dedicated to their students. Many teachers are involved in post-graduate study. They have had good training in AfL and initiatives including the Teaching and Learning 21 initiative. This anchors teaching in very good methodologies.
- Teachers have been involved in peer-mentoring and observing each others' lessons. Very good induction of teachers new to the department was evident.

- The school has a homework policy and teachers adhere well to the terms of this policy. It is suggested that this be adapted and a history department homework policy be prepared to guide teachers in preparing students for internal and external assessment.
- Good management support for history co-curricular activities was evident.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Department planning for History is of very good quality. A coordinator has been appointed. This position rotates in line with good practice. Meetings take place frequently. There was also evidence of meetings of sub-groups, for example, TY.
- A commendable feature of department planning is the very good collaboration and cooperation that exists amongst teachers in the department. There were many indicators of reflection and review, for example, the recent decision to give additional support to students in the form of agreed paragraph criteria.
- A comprehensive subject plan, including very good sections on literacy, numeracy and planning for students with additional educational needs was made available on the day of the inspection. A comprehensive set of schemes of work for different year groups has been prepared with clear learning outcomes, suggested methodologies and assessment tasks and a section on language and literacy. This attention to detail is commended. Classroom observation would suggest that these schemes are invaluable in guiding teachers' practice.
- There was evidence of good short-term and medium term planning within the department. With regard to areas for development the history department should also engage in long-term planning for the subject. For example it should analyse, reflect on and track its own certificate examination results and plan corrective actions if necessary. There should be a short section in the planning folder detailing the department's plans for the future and planned actions to reach those targets.
- Good planning for co-curricular activities was evident, for example, the well-organised annual trips to the National Museum.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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; a response was not received from the board.