An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Moyle Park College
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Roll number: 60121B

Date of inspection: 14 April 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HISTORY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>13 and 14 April 2011</th>
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<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Activities undertaken</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>• Interaction with students</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- Very good quality teaching and learning was observed in the majority of classrooms visited in the course of the evaluation.
- Very good attention to differentiation was seen across the department including the use of keywords, visuals and differentiated resource materials.
- The usage of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning in History is well advanced.
- Positive whole-school support for the subject including good curricular provision, a good range of resources and a variety of co-curricular activities was in evidence.
- History has a high profile in the school, students are encouraged to take higher-level papers and good educational outcomes are in place.
- A vibrant, hard-working team of teachers has ensured that very good planning for the subject takes place, though there is some scope for additional planning to facilitate common assessment in junior cycle.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students in all classrooms should be given frequent extended writing assignments and formative feedback on their work.
- Common examinations, differentiated for student access, should take place in junior cycle.
- Subject planning documentation should be expanded to include learning outcomes for each topic covered and termly schemes of work.
INTRODUCTION

Moyle Park College is a boys’ post-primary school in the voluntary sector under the patronage of the Marist Brothers. It has a current enrolment of 626 pupils. History is core at junior cycle and in the optional Transition Year (TY). The subject is available as an option to senior cycle students. The board of management of the school 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

• Very good quality teaching and learning was observed in the majority of classrooms visited in the course of the evaluation.

• Overall, lessons were well structured with very good pace and timing in evidence. In most lessons observed the proposed learning outcomes were made clear at the start of the lesson. In a few lessons a review of the topic covered and skills learned took place towards the lesson conclusion. These commendable strategies enhanced student learning and should be extended to all classrooms.

• Good use of teacher-led questioning to advance the topics covered was observed in all lessons. The use of wait time and directed questioning observed in many classrooms visited is commended as it promotes inclusion.

• Lessons in which open-ended questions were used allowed for good development of oral language skills and higher level thinking. These strategies merit wider use. In a minority of classrooms visited a better balance between the teacher and student voice was recommended.

• Some very good examples of the use of active learning methodologies were in evidence in many classrooms visited including pair work and cooperative learning. It is recommended that students are encouraged to be active in their learning in all lessons to promote self-directed learning.

• The use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning in History is well advanced. Teachers are highly commended for developing their own resources and for using existing ICT applications to enhance the student experience in the classroom.

• Very good use of resources including film clips and primary source materials added greatly to student understanding in many classrooms. In a minority of cases it was recommended that when the textbook is used as a resource, it not be overused and be supplemented with other resource materials.

• Very good attention to differentiation was in evidence across the department including differentiated questioning and student tasks. Very good attention to key words and visuals was observed in many lessons. This should be extended to all classrooms.

• Very good rapport between students and teachers was evident in classrooms visited. Classroom management was good and teachers dealt firmly and respectfully with any minor inattention.

• Frequent homework and regular testing was evident across the department. It is positive that a history homework policy is in place.
• In some classrooms visited very good practices in relation to assessment were evident such as frequent extended writing assignments, regular monitoring of homework and the use of formative assessment strategies. These should be adopted across the department.

• A commendable emphasis on the production of high quality house examination papers was evident across the department. It is generally the practice that each teacher sets their individual examinations. It is recommended that common testing, differentiated for student access if necessary, be adopted across the department for each year group in junior cycle.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

• Very good curricular provision and timetabling, in line with recommendations for the subject, were noted.

• Student-centred arrangements for access to the subject at Leaving Certificate level are in place.

• History has a high profile in the school and a higher than average number of students study the subject to Leaving Certificate. This is a tribute to students’ positive experience of the subject in junior cycle and the work done by teachers in promoting the subject.

• Good assessment modes for the subject were noted and good examination outcomes are in place. Formal examinations take place twice a year. It is commendable that assessment includes a project work component in first and second year. Assessment for the subject in TY is well thought out and in line with TY principles.

• It is commendable that an analysis of results in state examinations is undertaken by the department, that students are encouraged to take higher level in state examinations, and that uptake at this level is rising. This will require careful monitoring to ensure that students capable of achieving at this level do not drop back to a lower level.

• There is very good provision of resources in the school including a good school library and a smaller history library in one of the classrooms. The school has a well-catalogued range of history periodicals.

• Good ICT provision was also in evidence. It is very positive that the school is exploring the potential of Google Applications to support teaching and learning in the subject. It is recommended that as the ICT system expands that teachers upload resources to a history folder on the school network.

• A vibrant, hardworking team of teachers is involved in the delivery of the subject. There is a considerable expertise on the team especially in the areas of continuing professional development for the subject, ICT and special educational needs (SEN).

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• Very good department planning for the subject is evident including long-term planning. A coordinator is in place and regular meetings take place.

• There was evidence of very good collaboration and reflection in the department minutes in a wide range of areas including planning for differentiation, the sharing of resources, methodologies for teaching and learning and co-curricular activities such as a history movie club.
• Very good planning for TY was in evidence. An interesting and reflective TY module has been developed by the department.

• Significant work has gone into the development of the department plan and resources for the subject including revision packs and materials suitable for use with students with SEN. This is highly commended.

• To progress this good work further the department should agree termly schemes of work based on learning outcomes for the subject. This will facilitate the aforementioned common examinations.

• Teachers were well prepared for their classes. Some excellent examples of comprehensive planning for lessons were in evidence.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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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 Moyle Park College is pleased to welcome this very positive evaluation. It is delighted that the quality teaching and learning that is taking place in History and the professionalism of the teachers has been recognised and affirmed. The Board is aware that a lot of energy has been expended in integrating ICT into History classes, in increasing the number of students taking History at higher level and in focusing on the use of ‘key words’ as a means of differentiation and it appreciates that this has been recognised. The recognition given to the above average number of students who opt to take History as part of the Leaving Certificate programme is also heartening.

The Board also wishes to comment positively on the professional and supportive manner in which the evaluation was carried out by the Inspectorate.

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. They have:

- Incorporated extended writing assignments into their homework and assessment policies
- They will continue to roll out differentiated common assessments across the Junior Certificate year groups

They will continue their review of the learning outcomes and will further expanded termly schemes of work over the coming year.