

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Classical Studies
REPORT**

**St Conleth's College
Clyde Road, Dublin 4
Roll number: 60590N**

Date of inspection: 24 September 2013



**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 CLASSICAL STUDIES

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	24 September 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Discussion with the subject co-ordinator• 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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good with scope for development in a few areas.
- Preparation of resources was good and there was good use of information and communication technology (ICT).
- Student learning is supported, there is a very good rapport between students and teachers and students demonstrated enthusiasm for the subject.
- In most cases, homework was routinely assigned, there was good monitoring in lessons and good formative feedback was given to students.
- Whole-school support for the subject is good.
- There is considerable scope for development in subject planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Clear, specific and achievable learning outcomes should be written on the board at the start of lessons and learning should be summarised at the end.
- More opportunities for collaborative learning should be generated and a balance maintained between teacher and learner input.
- Subject-related language should be pre-taught to develop literacy.
- The subject plan should be reviewed in all programmes; it is strongly recommended that the Transition Year (TY) plan be redrafted as a priority, be learner-centred and underpinned by the principles of the programme.

INTRODUCTION

St Conleth's College is a fee-paying, voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 257 students. It caters for boys only in the junior cycle and in the compulsory TY but is co-educational in the Leaving Certificate programme and twenty-four girls are enrolled in total.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good with scope for development in a few areas.
- Planning for resources was good. Good text and ICT resources were prepared in advance.
- The design and pace of lessons were generally appropriate to the syllabus or programme being taught. There is some scope for review to ensure that students develop a broad understanding and appreciation of key concepts and core themes; all lesson content should be relevant to the planned programme.
- It is recommended that clear, specific and achievable learning outcomes be written on the board at the start of lessons. This will provide a clear learning framework. Planned outcomes should be revisited at the end of lessons to check if learning has been achieved by all students. Learning should be summarised.
- Students were provided with handouts and worksheets to support learning. To build on this good practice, students should learn how to be note makers.
- Good links were made to broader cultural contexts to stimulate and engage students.
- Students were actively involved in lessons through teacher questioning or reading from a text. There was a good balance between higher-order and lower-order questioning.
- Learners engaged well in most cases and contributed their views when asked. Many students demonstrated enthusiasm for the subject in class interactions.
- Energetic teacher exposition stimulated students' interest in some lessons. Teacher enthusiasm for the subject is highly commended. However, it is recommended that methods be reviewed to maintain an equal balance between teacher and learner input as there was an overemphasis on teacher talk in some cases.
- There was no evidence of co-operative learning or group work in lessons observed. Students should be afforded an opportunity to work collaboratively and to become independent learners.
- Classroom management was very good and routines were observed. Discipline was well maintained and there was a very good rapport between students and teachers.
- A print-rich learning environment was noted in a classroom visited and this good practice should be emulated in others.
- It is recommended that a formal focus be placed on the development of subject-related language by pre-teaching content language. Planned discussion should also be included to develop oracy.
- In most cases, homework was routinely assigned and there was good monitoring in lessons. It is very commendable that in most lessons, copybooks indicated that formative feedback directed learning. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is a good level of whole-school support for the subject. Timetabling allocation is appropriate and resources are very good.
- Access is good. All students take Latin in first year and areas of learning common to both Latin and Classical Studies are taught. In second year, students can choose Classical Studies, Latin or Music. In the senior cycle, Classical Studies is compulsory so that all students experience its cultural diversity. In the Leaving Certificate programme, option bands are formed based on students' preferences and uptake varies year on year.
- Classes are organised in mixed-ability settings.
- There is a good level of engagement with continuing professional development (CPD) and this is commended and teachers are very enthusiastic and committed to the subject.
- Extracurricular and co-curricular activities support learning and this is commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is evidence of cooperative planning. Records of department meetings are maintained and this is positive.
- Individual teacher planning varied. In one case, folders containing comprehensive notes were presented to the inspector and these showed a good level of planning for content support. Good practice should be shared.
- A start has been made in subject planning and a broad scheme of work is in place. However, there is considerable scope for development. It is recommended that the subject plan be redrafted to focus on learning outcomes based on the syllabus in all programmes. These should be clearly linked to methods and resources to be used, and assessment practice to be implemented, both formative and summative.
- It is positive that examination outcomes are analysed and circulated to all staff. These should form part of the evidence base to assist the department in developing action plans for improvement in teaching and learning. It would be very desirable for the department to link some of its targets to whole-school learning themes agreed through the school's self-evaluation process.
- There are important and useful documents in the general folder such as syllabuses and key overarching school policies. The school's homework policy is commended.
- The TY programme as currently documented is too narrow and limited in content. Planning for learning is not detailed. The full potential of the subject and programme should be exploited to promote learning and form a bridge between the junior and senior cycles. The needs of learners must be central given that the subject is compulsory and many may not have chosen it in the junior cycle or may not intend to choose it in the Leaving Certificate programme. The TY Classical Studies programme should be reviewed as a priority and it should be underpinned by the programme's key principles.
- Good records were kept in some cases. Good practice should be shared to ensure consistency.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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