

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of History
REPORT**

**King's Hospital School
Palmerstown
Dublin 22
Roll number: 60272W**

Date of inspection: 19th October 2011



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HISTORY**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	18 th and 19 th October 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of teaching was very good. Some examples of excellent practice were evident.
- Well-structured lessons, combined with good quality questioning and well-chosen resources ensured good student engagement with the topics being taught.
- Assessment is a key area of strength in the department. Very good modes of assessment that are well-integrated with school assessment structures and a good emphasis on attainment and achievement were in evidence.
- Resources for the subject are very good. A wide range of electronic and hard copy resources support teaching and learning in the subject.
- Time allocation for the subject is good at all levels and History has a high profile in the school.
- Exemplary departmental planning for the subject was in evidence.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To promote student inclusion, greater attention should be paid to differentiation strategies such as differentiated questioning, the use of the board/screen to introduce the learning outcomes and key words associated with the lesson and wider use of cooperative learning methodologies.
 - The current timetabling arrangement where many classes are taught History by more than one teacher should be reviewed.
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INTRODUCTION

King's Hospital School is a co-educational post-primary school. It has a current enrolment of 686 pupils. History is core at junior cycle. History is core in the compulsory Transition Year (TY). The subject is available as an option to senior cycle students. The school operates a six day teaching week. Full-time boarding facilities are available in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching was very good. Some examples of excellent practice were evident.
- In all lessons observed, the topic for the lesson was clear and in a few instances this was written on the board or screen. Learning objectives were shared with students in some lessons observed. The above good practices should be extended to all lessons.
- Many lessons commenced with the correction of homework. Good use of questioning to revise prior learning and to develop the lesson was also observed.
- Some teachers encouraged the development of higher level thinking by combining open-ended questioning and pair work. This good strategy merits wider use.
- The use of wait time was also suggested as a means of including a greater rate of student participation in the questioning process.
- A good variety of teaching and learning methodologies were in use with frequent but not exclusive use of the digital projector to show film clips, PowerPoint presentations and visual material. Teachers are commended for the excellent work that they have put into sourcing and preparing resources for the subject.
- In some lessons observed there was good integration of independent learning opportunities such as individual work and student presentations. It is recommended that students be given the opportunity to be active in their learning, where possible.
- Innovative resources and strategies were used in many lessons to encourage student engagement and participation.
- Very good attention was paid to the development of students' historical skills. Students are encouraged to read widely in the subject and teachers are proactive in directing students to suitable reading materials from the wide range of school history resources.
- The quality of learning was good as evidenced by student responses. However more attention could have been paid to differentiation strategies in many lessons observed such as the placing of key vocabulary on the board as the lesson progresses and the use of visuals and cooperative learning techniques.
- Assessment is a key area of strength in the department and assessment outcomes are very good. A wide range of assessment strategies, including *Assessment for Learning* strategies, are well integrated into the school-wide assessment systems. Homework is given regularly and frequently monitored.
- There was a warm supportive learning environment in all lessons observed. Classroom management was very good in all instances.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Time allocation for History is good. Leaving Certificate students have the recommended five class periods a week for History. TY students study History for two periods a week over the full year.
- Second and third year students have three class periods per week. First year student provision of two periods per week is lower than average as students sample a range of subjects for all of first year. This should be kept under review to ensure that it is best meeting the needs of students.
- Timetabling arrangements for the subject are atypical as the six-day school week puts constraints on the timetable. Almost half the history classes in the school have two teachers for the subject. In one instance in second year students have three different teachers for each of the three class periods allocated to History. This is unsatisfactory.
- There was evidence to suggest that this sharing of classes is having a negative effect on student learning. There was also evidence to suggest that it impacts negatively on student attainment in certificate examinations for some of those students taught in shared classes. It is strongly recommended that the system whereby many classes have more than one teacher for the subject is reviewed.
- It is also recommended that when PGDE students are allocated classes for teaching practice that two PGDE students do not share the same class group.
- Students have good access to the subject at Leaving Certificate level. History has a high profile in the school as evidenced by the fact that there are at least two history classes in each Leaving Certificate year. This is a testament to students' experience of History at junior cycle.
- The provision of resources for the subject is very good. There are comprehensive history libraries in many of the rooms in which History is taught with a good range of periodicals, DVDs and other well-catalogued resources. A good size library and the school archives are important additional resources for the subject.
- There are very good systems in place in the school that focus on student attainment and achievement such as the Academic Council and the monthly effort reports.
- Two history prizes conferred at the annual prize-giving underline this focus as does the history section on the school web-site.
- It is commendable that the school pays subject association fees for teachers.
- There is considerable expertise on the history teaching team and their dedication to the subject and the students in their care is noteworthy.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Exemplary departmental planning is in place and the department is very ably coordinated.
- Comprehensive planning records of a very high quality are kept. Minutes of meetings indicate that the department is reflective and highly collaborative. Planning for student attainment is well established.
- There are good links between the history team and the department supporting students with additional educational needs with good planning for differentiation evident in the department folder. However this was not always translated into classroom practice.

- Excellent schemes of work which are regularly reviewed are in place. Very good systems are in place to manage that review.
 - The history department have worked together to outline established practices and procedures in relation to a range of issues including assessment. These as well as excellent schemes of work facilitate common testing.
 - The department works well together on the promotion of History in the school. A good range of co-curricular activities including a history society are in place.
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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.