

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of History  
REPORT**

**Clongowes Wood College,  
Co. Kildare  
Roll number: 61720F**

**Date of inspection: 31 March 2011**



**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>Dates of inspection</b>	30 and 31 March 2011
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Very high quality teaching and learning was in evidence across the department during the course of the inspection.
- Excellent use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning is in place.
- A very wide range of inclusive teaching methodologies, including the use of questioning, cooperative learning strategies and differentiated tasks, contribute in a positive way to the creation of a vibrant and participative learning environment.
- Very good assessment procedures including the frequent monitoring and setting of homework using Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies, regular testing and project work were in evidence and very good assessment outcomes are in place.
- Whole-school support for the subject, such as the excellent school library and archives, the well-appointed teacher based rooms and the provision of resources, is very good.
- Exemplary individual and team planning for the subject were in evidence.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There is scope to extend the use of visuals in student assessment tasks at junior cycle.
  - Curricular provision for second year students should be increased.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Clongowes Wood College is a post-primary boarding school under the patronage of the Jesuit Order. It has a current enrolment of 444 pupils. History is core at junior cycle. A history module is studied in the compulsory 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Very high quality teaching and learning was in evidence across the department during the course of the inspection.
- Lessons observed were well structured and a very good range of teaching methodologies were in use including active learning methodologies.
- The use of proposed learning outcomes at the start of all lessons is commended. In some lessons teachers made time for review at the end. This good strategy merits wider use.
- Excellent use of ICT to support teaching and learning is in place. In classrooms visited film clips, podcasts, visuals and PowerPoint presentations contributed positively to student understanding.
- Questioning was used to very good effect to advance the lesson, to include all students and to develop higher-order thinking.
- Very good attention to differentiation was in evidence. Collaborative learning and the grouping of students contributed in a very positive way to the creation of a vibrant, participative classroom environment.
- The use of visuals and differentiated tasks in classrooms visited ensured that students in need of additional support, including students with English as an additional language, were included in the learning process.
- Good attention to the augmentation of student vocabulary was evident across the department. To consolidate this good work further, it is recommended that the strategy noted in some classrooms visited, where keywords were noted on the board, is extended to all classrooms.
- Very good development of historical skills was noted in classrooms visited. Students were routinely reminded of the importance of evidence when coming to a historical judgement and treatment of second order concepts such as bias, prejudice and interpretation was very good.
- A very warm, inclusive atmosphere was noted in lessons observed. Classroom management was excellent in all instances.
- Very good assessment modes are in place in the school including frequent homework and regular monitoring with AfL strategies, project work and regular testing.
- It is suggested, to cater for visual learners, that junior cycle students are encouraged to complete drawing tasks, such as labelled diagrams, as well as written assignments.
- Very good preparation for certificate examinations was noted and very good educational outcomes are in place across the full range of student ability.

- It is very positive that common testing takes place. Members of the department collaborate well in regard to the drawing up of examination papers. It is recommended that teachers ensure that a good range of visuals, including maps and photographs, are used in these papers.

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

- Very good curricular provision at senior cycle is in place. Students in Leaving Certificate students have five class periods per week in line with recommendations. All TY students complete a history module of approximately twenty-four class periods.
- History provision in junior cycle is lower than average. Second year students have only two class periods per week. The school reported that a review of junior cycle provision, to be carried out in the near future, will provide an extra history period for second year students. This is to be welcomed.
- Overall timetabling for the subject is good. It is recommended that management try to ensure that junior cycle history classes are spread across the week rather than on consecutive days.
- Very good student-centred arrangements for access to the subject at Leaving Certificate level are in place. Every effort is made to ensure that students get the subjects of their choice.
- There is very good provision of resources for the subject. An excellent library with a very good history section, the school archives and general school environment are all additional valuable resources for history teaching. It is recommended that optimum use is made of the school archives when planning for individual lessons take place.
- The school is highly commended for its provision of a moodle, an open source e-learning software platform, with a dedicated history resource area. This allows students and staff access to a wide range of supports, including film, and operates as a virtual learning environment (VLE).
- Well equipped teacher-based rooms with a print-rich environment further support teaching and learning in the subject.
- A dedicated team of five teachers is involved in the delivery of the history curriculum. Teachers have been accommodated in their attendance at in-service.
- It is positive that an assessment and homework policy is in place. Formal examinations take place regularly and parents receive regular updates on student progress.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Exemplary department planning for the subject was evident. A coordinator is in place and regular meetings take place. Minutes of meetings show that the sharing of ideas in relation to history teaching, and reflection on and analysis of certificate examination results takes place regularly.
- Very good collaboration between teachers in relation to the department's moodle was evident. There is very good expertise in ICT on the team. Team members are commended for building up a good range of digital resources including a film library and podcasts.

- An excellent department plan is in place with clearly defined aims and objectives, schemes of work and learning outcomes for each section of the course. Very good attention to skills development including essay writing and listening and speaking skills was evident.
- To help teachers new to the department, it is recommended that the actual syllabus topics covered in Leaving Certificate History are clarified in the plan.
- Very good planning for TY was in evidence. An interesting and varied TY history programme is in place.
- The department is commended for the very good links it has established with the team responsible for students with additional educational needs.
- A very good range of co-curricular activities, including educational visits, support teaching and learning.
- Individual planning of a high quality was in evidence including planning for resources. Very good teacher record keeping is in place.

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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.