

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of History
REPORT**

**Wilson's Hospital School
Multyfarnham
Co. Westmeath
Roll number: 63300Q**

Date of inspection: 20 September 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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	26 September 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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Very good quality teaching was noted in lessons observed. Classroom management was very effective and a secure supportive learning environment was evident in all classrooms visited.
- Good assessment modes are in place including common testing, frequent homework, regular monitoring of students work with formative feedback and high quality questioning. Assessment outcomes are very good.
- Lessons were well-structured and independent learning opportunities were provided in many lessons although there is some scope for development in this area.
- Curricular provision for History is fully appropriate and arrangements for access to the subject at senior cycle are very student-centred.
- A hard-working, dedicated team of teachers has ensured that effective planning for the subject takes place, including high quality schemes of work.
- Very good collaboration between members of the team was noted.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater use should be made of the board to introduce the intended learning outcomes of the lesson and to highlight down key terms.
 - The use of directed questioning and active learning methodologies such as group work or pair work should be extended.
 - Subject department meetings should be held regularly and meetings should be minuted.
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INTRODUCTION

Wilson's Hospital School is a co-educational post-primary school. It has a current enrolment of 414 pupils, more than half of whom are boarders. 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very good quality teaching was in evidence across the department.
- Very good pupil-teacher relations were noted. Effective classroom management contributed to a secure and supportive learning environment.
- Good pace and timing was in place in lessons observed. Lessons were well structured and the proposed lesson outcomes were introduced orally at the lesson onset. It was recommended that these be outlined in writing on the board to bring additional clarity to the lessons.
- Questioning was used to revise prior learning, check understanding and to advance the lessons observed. Student answering showed that good quality learning was taking place. Directed questioning should be more widely used to ensure that all students are included in the learning process.
- Student oral responses were encouraged in all lessons. This is commended as a good aid to student literacy.
- A good range of resources was used in classrooms visited including visual resources. Very good use of ICT, including film clips, was in evidence in all lessons observed.
- Teacher-produced resources, including high quality PowerPoint presentations, added greatly to student understanding. It was suggested that greater use be made of maps when European and world history is being taught.
- Independent learning opportunities were created in some lessons observed. Teachers should extend the use of these and other active learning methodologies such as pair work and group work to provide a greater range of learning opportunities to students.
- Differentiation, in general, was effectively managed. An emphasis on key terms, visuals and the use of extension work was noted in many lessons. However, greater use should be made of the board and word banks to facilitate the acquisition of key terms associated with lessons or assignments.
- Good assessment modes were noted. Homework is given frequently and regularly monitored. Teachers give students formative feedback on their work.
- Good emphasis on, and support for, extended writing practice was in evidence, although in some instances students could be given more regular practice in this area.
- Students are prepared well for certificate examinations and very good examination outcomes were noted.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good curricular provision for History in the school. Junior cycle students have three class periods per week. Leaving Certificate students have the recommended five class periods per week.
- All TY students study History for a half year module. TY provision is three class periods per week.
- Timetabling for the subject is good with a good spread of lessons across the week and between morning and afternoon lessons.
- There are good arrangements for student access to the subject at senior level. Students are given a free choice and then option bands are created to facilitate as many students' preferences as possible.
- History teachers promote their subject informally to TY students. It was suggested that members of the team collaborate on a more formal intervention such as a PowerPoint presentation.
- Classrooms visited were well-appointed with very good storage and information and communication technology (ICT) equipment, including a data projector and DVD player. A print rich environment has been created in all rooms visited.
- Management are open to the purchase of resources and a number of resources have been acquired. These are, in the main, stored in classrooms.
- Teachers have developed a number of ICT resources. It is commendable that many of these have been uploaded to folders in classroom computers and the main staffroom computer. It is recommended that plans be made, in time, to network school computers so that ICT resources created or downloaded are easily accessed from all ICT locations.
- A dedicated and hardworking team of two teachers are involved in the delivery of the subject. They are well-qualified and have attended in-service training. It is commendable that teachers have undertaken further in-service training in their own time including attendance at the annual history teachers' conference.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A coordinator is in place and teachers meet both formally and informally a couple of times a year. It is recommended that formal minuted meetings take place regularly.
- Team meetings should have a formal agenda. Team members should ensure that medium and long-term planning for the subject is addressed at meetings in addition to short term planning.
- Team members collaborate well on a range of issues including the sharing of resources and subject planning.
- A well organised subject plan was made available including very good schemes of work. It is positive that most of the schemes of work contain suggested assessment tasks, suitable methodologies and learning outcomes. This good work should be built on in the years to come.
- Teachers teaching classes in the same year group make effective use of the high quality schemes of work to teach topics at the same pace. This contributes in a very positive way to common testing which is a feature of good practice in the school.

- Effective planning for co-curricular activities such as history trips was in evidence.
 - There are very good links between the history department and the learning support department. Effective links between the department and other departments were also noted.
 - There was effective individual planning for lessons. Teachers keep good records of student's attendance and attainment.
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The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.