

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of History
REPORT**

**Scoil Chríost Rí, Presentation College,
Portlaoise, Co. Laois.
Roll number: 634510**

Date of inspection: 21st April 2016



**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	20 th and 21 st April 2016.
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 eight class periods.• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning varied from very good to fair with some instances of excellent practice.
- Learning in lessons is supported by an attractive and stimulating environment that promotes and celebrates the subject.
- There is clear evidence of collaborative planning in the development and implementation of the subject plan.
- The majority of lessons had a clearly planned development that included good use of selected resources to enhance learning.
- Good engagement with primary historical sources such as film clips and photographs was evident in most lessons.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should receive regular formative feedback to encourage them to evaluate and improve their own work.
 - To build on the good practice observed, the history team should consider ways to share teaching methodologies that encourage independent learning among students.
 - A greater focus on differentiated teaching methods should be considered to ensure optimal learning opportunities for all students.
 - More formal meeting time is needed for appropriately recorded meetings of the history department.
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INTRODUCTION

Scoil Chríost Rí, is a voluntary Catholic secondary school for girls with an enrolment of 886. The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to fair. In some lessons, elements of excellent practice were in evidence.
- All lessons observed had clear learning intentions and these were communicated to students at the outset. In best practice, learning intentions were fully explored with students and reviewed at the end of the class to consolidate learning. The embedding of these good practices in all history lessons is encouraged.
- The supportive learning environment of the majority of classrooms visited was evidenced by the good rapport that the teachers had with their students and the affirmation of students' efforts during the lessons. The classroom displays of history subject materials that included examples of students' work served to further enhance the learning environment.
- In most lessons resources such as information and communications technology (ICT), the classroom board, textbook and handouts were used effectively to enhance learning.
- In the best lessons, student initiative, activity and creativity were encouraged through independent learning opportunities that allowed students to have autonomy in their own learning. To build on these good practices, the history department should consider ways to share teaching approaches that facilitate active learning.
- In most lessons observed, good use was made of primary sources such as quotes from key personalities, maps, photographs and film clips. However in one lesson the absence of visual supports negatively impacted the quality of student learning.
- In the best lessons, effective links were made between lesson topics and students' own lives, thus enhancing student engagement with the lesson content.
- In all lessons observed, lower-order questioning to assess knowledge was used effectively. In a few lessons, some higher-order questions that encouraged critical thinking and initiated discussion among students was observed. This should be extended to all history lessons. Questioning strategies should take into account the differing abilities of all students.
- In most lessons, teachers generated and maintained enthusiasm for the topic under study. In these lessons the students own enthusiasm and enjoyment of the subject was evident.
- More attention should be given to differentiated teaching methodologies to ensure the learning needs of all students are met. This could include the differentiation of learning outcomes, homework tasks and questioning strategies.
- The history department is encouraged to develop a subject –specific homework policy, in line with the whole-school policy for the purpose of developing consistency in the manner in which homework is presented and stored.
- Homework was regularly set and monitored in almost all lessons. However, the nature of the feedback in sample copies did not always encourage students to evaluate and improve

their work. It is, therefore, recommended that students receive consistent and regular formative feedback.

- The development of students' literacy skills was supported in most lessons through the teachers' effective emphasis on subject-specific key words. Where it was at its best, the specific vocabulary relating to the topics was presented clearly by the teachers to their students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Curricular provision and the timetabling allocation for History are strongly supportive of the subject.
- History is very well resourced and the provision of teacher-based rooms in general and availability of ICT resources are very supportive of the teaching and learning of History.
- Management supports teachers' engagement with continuing professional development. All teachers in the history team are encouraged to avail of membership of the History Teachers Association of Ireland.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject department plan for History is very good. Subject co-ordinators actively facilitate the sharing of resources, and good collaborative practice has been established in overall planning.
 - The subject plan clearly identifies learning outcomes for students in each year group and reflects all aspects of the syllabus and programme requirements.
 - More formal subject team meetings are needed. While it is acknowledged that the team hold informal planning meetings, more formal, minuted meeting time needs to be made available. Preferably, one meeting per term should be held. Such meetings would provide more formal settings where collaborative discussions at department level on important aspects of teaching and learning could be held. The outcomes of these discussions should be recorded in the department plan.
 - The TY history plan is comprehensive and has a good focus on student project work. A review of the current eight week module is encouraged so that longer history modules could be facilitated.
 - The school is commended for tracking formal assessment outcomes and uptake levels and comparing them against national norms. Details of how the history teachers' reflection on how this analysis informs classroom pedagogy and target setting should be included in the subject department plan.
 - It is recommended that teachers share teaching and learning strategies, including the use of ICT and methods of differentiating learning, at subject department meetings.
 - Good individual planning was evident in most instances and it is positive that the majority of teachers had prepared a range of resources to support their teaching.
 - Very good co-curricular planning for History was evident. For example, history trips take place regularly across most year groups.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. 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.