

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Classical Studies
REPORT**

**John Scottus Secondary School
72-76 Morehampton Road, Dublin 4
Roll number: 68071G**

Date of inspection: 18 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	18 September 2013
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- The promotion of higher-order thinking skills through questioning was a particular strength.
- Students learn in a supportive environment and interpersonal relationships are very good.
- Formative assessment to direct learning was noted in copybook feedback.
- The school's ethos is very supportive of all classical subjects, there is excellent engagement with teacher continuing professional development and very good provision of extracurricular and co-curricular activities for students.
- Long and short-term planning was good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Building on existing good practice, further efforts should be made to focus on literacy development.
 - Differentiation practice should be further developed in content teaching, tasks set and assessment.
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INTRODUCTION

John Scottus Secondary School provides a varied curriculum and has a current enrolment of 136 boys and girls. The school provides Classical Studies currently in third year, fifth year and sixth year. It also provides Latin and Ancient Greek in both the junior and senior cycles and all three subject areas work in close co-operation.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in three lessons observed over five class periods.
- Planning for learning was very good. Creative approaches were used to ensure resources and learning activities engaged students. Interesting use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) resources to clarify understanding and stimulate interest.
- In one very good lesson, the learning intention was made clear to students using both the board and a digital projector. This good practice is worth repeating in all lessons.
- A very good range of strategies was deployed to teach new content and to reinforce learning. Students worked co-operatively; games were used to vary activity and this was particularly valuable in a junior cycle double lesson to maintain concentration and engagement. Incentives such as rewards made learning fun. Questioning strategy put a strong focus on higher-order thinking skills.
- Classroom management was very effective, activities were well managed and routines observed. There was a very good level of communication between students and the teacher. Students learn in a supportive environment and interpersonal relationships are very good.
- Students displayed a very positive attitude to the subject, asked questions, entered freely into discussion and regularly expressed their views on the topics raised.
- Content knowledge and understanding of concepts was very good relevant to each stage of learning.
- It is noted that content language receives attention and in one case, a topic word list was mounted on the wall. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that further opportunities to develop both content language and general literacy be developed.
- Students' learning was constantly monitored. High expectations were evident in classroom activity and in the quality of work submitted. Some good answers were noted in samples of work in particular from the senior cycle students. It is very commendable that materials from the state examinations commission are used to guide students' learning in the examination classes.
- Good subject displays enriched the classroom environment and interest in the classical world was also reflected in the range of displays in the school's general areas.
- Assessment practice is good. Formative assessment to direct learning was noted in copybook feedback. For example, in one instance, a student was given clear and succinct advice as to how to improve the answer. This is very good practice.
- It is reported that account is duly taken of students' different learning needs and this is very positive given that all Classical Studies students are taught in a mixed-ability setting.

Differentiation practice should be further developed through planned learning activities and tasks set in lessons, through homework assigned, and through modes of assessment. The purpose is to scaffold learning for those with special needs and to challenge those at the upper end of the ability spectrum.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is strong support for classical subjects in John Scottus Secondary School. Every effort is made to provide a rich curriculum. Uptake of the subject is good relative to the school's size, and most students take it at higher level.
- Time allocation for the subject is appropriate. The school is actively engaged in curriculum planning in line with review of the junior cycle and is currently attempting to support the classical subjects within the new junior cycle framework. There is a good deal of focus on cross-curricular approaches and on the provision of double lessons to facilitate project work.
- This year, Classical Studies is not provided in first or second year. The continuity of the subject in the junior cycle may not be viable in this context. This is regrettable given the clear enjoyment of the subject in evidence among the junior cycle students encountered in the classroom. The school should consider how best it could increase access to Classical Studies in the junior cycle while taking into account its available resources. It is very positive that junior cycle Latin and Ancient Greek courses cover some areas of civilisation common to Classical Studies.
- There is a very strong commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) among teachers of all classical subjects and a significant number of events and activities are evidence of this. This is highly commended.
- Extra-curricular and co-curricular activities support student learning in different sites. Of particular note is the school's recent engagement in a Comenius exchange programme organised through Léargas, the national agency. Students had the opportunity to visit Greece, engage with students there and visit key sites associated with the ancient world. This represents excellent work on the part of the classics department.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A good subject plan is in place with clear aims and objectives in line with the syllabus. To develop the plan further, it is suggested that a learning outcomes framework be adopted with links to skills and learning to be achieved.
 - The syllabus is mapped out chronologically to ensure timely delivery in preparation for state examinations. It is very commendable that examination outcomes are analysed and these should be used to feed into planning in line with school self-evaluation practice.
 - Planning is co-operative in nature and supports cross-curricular approaches. The three teachers of the classical subjects, Classical Studies, Latin and Ancient Greek work closely together and this is very laudable. Records of meetings are maintained.
 - Record keeping is good.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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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