

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of History  
REPORT**

**Collinstown Park Community College  
Clondalkin, Dublin 22  
Roll number: 70041J**

**Date of inspection: 30 January 2013**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	29-30 January 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good to very good in the lessons observed.
- A good variety of methodologies and resources were used to support learning.
- The students engaged well in the study of their lesson topic.
- The history teachers effectively monitor their students' progress.
- There is strong whole-school support for History.
- The history teachers collaborate well to ensure the development of History in the school.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Greater exploration of questioning and active learning methodologies to support student learning is recommended.
  - The occurrence of a long interval between history lessons in the timetable for a junior cycle class group should be avoided, where practicable.
  - The teachers' planned schemes of the coursework in the subject department plan should be further developed and new sections should be included in the department's plan on strategic planning for History and teachers' reflection on their analysis of the annual results for History in the certificate examinations.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Collinstown Park Community College is a co-educational, post-primary school that provides the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes, Transition Year (TY) and post-leaving certificate (PLC) courses. TY is mandatory for the second-level students. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan. 626 second-level students are currently enrolled. The school's trustee is the Co. Dublin Vocational Education Committee (VEC).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- A positive, supportive atmosphere for learning was an inherent aspect of all lessons. Classroom management was uniformly very good. Student learning was consolidated by a variety of methodologies. The displays of subject materials in the teachers' classrooms enhanced the learning environment.
- The teachers engaged their students well at the outset by informing them of the purpose of the lesson. The lesson topic and the intended learning outcomes were displayed on the board or screen in most lessons.
- During the lessons visual resources such as video clips, selected images and PowerPoint presentations were used effectively to support learning. These also facilitated the setting of worksheet assignments and complemented the students' study of the lesson material in their textbook and in prepared handouts.
- Teachers frequently interacted with students to guide and gauge learning through questioning, exposition and informative comment. In a number of lessons most questions asked were either addressed to the class or directed to individual students and overall, there was limited use of higher-order questions to prompt discussion. It is recommended that a broad mix of question types be used during lessons in order to maximise the impact on learning.
- Independent learning activities such as note-taking and written assignments provided opportunities for students to consolidate their learning. Notwithstanding the provision of such opportunities, there was a large input from teachers relative to the input from students during some lessons. In this context, exploration of the scope to make greater use of active learning methodologies that can increase student input during the lesson such as pair work and group work is recommended.
- Development of the students' literacy skills was supported during the lessons. For example, good emphasis was placed on key words that were relevant to the lesson topic. Greater use could have been made of the board to highlight particular words that were verbally emphasised during some lessons.
- The teachers regularly set and correct homework assignments. Written formative comments are frequently provided to give students clear direction as to how to improve the quality of their work. By way of supporting the development of this commendable practice, it is recommended that the scope to expand on teachers' succinct, affirmative comments such as "very good" be also explored.

- Students were attentive and engaged well in the study of their lesson topic. The sample of copybooks reviewed during the evaluation reflected their application to their coursework. Some inconsistency was noted in the recording of homework by some junior cycle students in the sample of students' journals perused.
- Teachers monitor closely their students' progress both formally and informally through for example, classroom observation, homework assignments, class tests and the students' achievements in formal examinations.

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

- History is a core subject for junior cycle students with the exception of one class group in each junior cycle year comprising students with special educational needs. These students study Environmental and Social Studies (ESS), which has a history and geography content.
- Leaving Certificate students are provided with the opportunity to study History as an optional subject choice. TY students undertake a six-week module on history and geography research skills. While acknowledging the formal contact that TY students have with History, increased provision of History in any future review of the TY programme is encouraged.
- History is very well resourced and the timetabled provision of lesson periods is supportive of the subject. However, the occurrence of a long interval between the last history lesson of one week and the first history lesson of the following week such as occurs in the case of some junior cycle class groups should be avoided, where practicable.
- The full complement of the history team is deployed to teach the subject and this good practice enables the teachers to remain actively involved in the development of the subject. Continuity of contact is also maintained, where feasible, with the class group to which the teacher is initially assigned.
- Management reviews all subject department plans annually to support the teaching staff in their work.
- School management actively encourages teachers to engage in continuous professional development (CPD). The attendance of the history teachers at in-service training for History is facilitated.
- The academic progress of students is encouraged by commendable initiatives such as the current pilot academic monitor initiative to assist third-year and sixth-year students in setting, monitoring and reviewing their personal goals.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The history department actively supports the continued development of History in the school. A subject co-ordinator has been appointed. Subject department meetings are regularly convened and the history teachers collaborate well as evidenced for example, by their ongoing development of the department's e-folder.
- The teachers' annual schemes of work that are contained in the subject department plan are strongest in terms of the aspects of the coursework that will be taught. It is

recommended that they be further developed to include details of the methodologies and resources to be employed in teaching each topic. The learning outcomes should also be further outlined and include references to the means of assessing the students' achievement of the learning outcomes.

- The department's annual analysis of the students' achievements in History in the certificate examinations is used to set targets and inform the teaching and study of History. By way of supporting this good work it is recommended that a brief synopsis of the teachers' annual reflections on the analysis be included in the subject department plan. A strategic planning section outlining areas for subject improvement should also be included.
- All lessons had a clearly planned development that included well-chosen supplementary resources to support teaching and learning.

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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. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

# **Appendix**

## **School response to the report**

### **Submitted by the Board of Management**

#### **Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.**

The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge the courteous and professional manner in which the subject inspection was conducted. The Board considers this report to be an endorsement of teachers' hard work and commitment and commend the work of the History department.

#### **Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

- Continued promotion of Assessment for Learning techniques with particular focus on questioning techniques in order to ensure a broad mix of question types as recommended in the report. The school already has in place a team of teachers who are committed to promoting Assessment for Learning strategies within the school.
- In relation to subject development, further development of planned schemes including teachers' analysis of annual results for History.