

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Classical Studies  
REPORT**

**St Fintan's High School  
Sutton, Dublin 13  
Roll number: 60370W**

**Date of inspection: 7 March 2014**



**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**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	7 March 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teacher</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teacher</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching and learning was quite good with some areas for development.
- There was very good emphasis on literacy development.
- Resources such as slides were prepared in advance and lessons had a specific teaching focus.
- Questioning was used to check knowledge and understanding.
- Students displayed a good knowledge of subject matter covered.
- The disruptive behaviour of some students in one lesson impacted negatively on the student learning experience.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The learning outcomes to be achieved by all students should be written on the board at the start of lessons and at the end, learning should be summarised; the learning activities need to be sufficiently varied and focused to reinforce the specific learning.
  - The school's code of behaviour should be invoked and sanctions applied to students who persistently disrupt lessons.
  - Double periods should be split between contrasting topics to maintain interest and concentration in junior cycle classes.
  - Planning should be reviewed in a number of areas.
-

## INTRODUCTION

St Fintan's High School is an all-boys voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust and has a current reenrolment of 663 students. It provides the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate programmes, and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning was quite good with some areas for development.
- All lessons had a syllabus-relevant teaching focus. To develop planning for learning, specific, achievable and differentiated learning outcomes should be written on the board at the start of lessons and at the end, learning should be checked and should be summarised.
- Double periods should be split between contrasting topics to maintain interest and concentration in junior cycle classes. This is easily achieved given the rich variety of topics on the syllabus. For example, a literary text such as *The Iliad* could be taught in the first period of the lesson, while the second period could deal with aspects of Roman civilisation associated with the topic, *A Roman City, Pompeii*. Such a division would lend itself to a variety of teaching approaches and resources to cater for the diverse learning needs of students. This would also facilitate more rounded summative assessment.
- There was very good emphasis on literacy development. Students' knowledge of subject-related language was checked and enhanced. The active use of a keyword chart is highly commended.
- Resources such as slides were prepared in advance to support learning. It is suggested that accompanying worksheets be distributed to students to focus students' attention on the content.
- The behaviour of some students in one lesson impacted negatively on the student learning experience. The school's code of behaviour should be invoked and sanctions applied to students who persistently disrupt lessons.
- The management of learning activities is an area for development. For example, in one lesson, students worked collaboratively to dramatise a section of *The Iliad*. While this activity is commendable, students should fully understand and observe the etiquette of group work and all students should have a defined role. There should be a clear focus on the learning to be achieved.
- Students read from the text and questioning was used to check knowledge and understanding. The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies would enhance this activity further. There is scope for more higher-order questioning.
- To enrich skills development, students should be encouraged to engage in independent learning and research, presenting their findings to their peers using information and communication technology. They could also make models to enhance creative engagement. These activities could be carried out collaboratively.
- Many students displayed a good knowledge of subject matter covered.
- Students should learn how to manage their folders and copybooks with a focus on well presented and orderly work.

- Homework is regularly set and monitored in class. To build on this, it is suggested that written teacher feedback be given to students to direct learning and students should be required to respond to the suggestions made by the teacher.
- Overall there is scope to improve attainment, especially for those at each end of the ability spectrum.

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

- Whole-school support is generally good. The subject is made available as an option to all students after a tasting period in first year. Uptake of higher level is good.
- Timetabling allocation is in line with subject requirements. However lesson distribution is a challenge. The school has one option band and Classical Studies (CS) is set against some practical subjects so that all lessons are double periods. This does not create optimal learning conditions for the subject. However, the school is commended for providing a culturally enriching subject, and the double periods could be offset to some extent by careful management of the learning time allocated as advised above.
- The subject is not currently being studied in the senior cycle. It is reported that competing interest in other subjects has resulted in very limited student interest. In conjunction with the subject teacher, it is suggested that further ways of promoting Classical Studies be explored in order to ensure continuity of learning from junior to senior cycle. Consideration could be given to a module in the Transition Year.
- The subject teacher is appropriately qualified and has engaged well with continuing professional development (CPD).

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Planning has been developed for the subject in the junior cycle and a scheme of work from first year to third year is documented. The plan, described as a policy, outlines the syllabus aims and objectives.
- The first-year taster module broadly reflects the discrete first-year syllabus but information is limited and this needs to be fleshed out. It is of four weeks duration and is set within a band of five sampling subjects.
- The first-year programme implemented in the second part of the year needs to be more detailed also and some variety introduced to prevent a reiteration of the taster topics.
- Overall, the subject plan should be documented within a learning outcomes framework and there should be an integrated approach between learning to be achieved, resources to be used, learning activities to be implemented to deliver the outcomes and assessment modes to be deployed including assessment for learning strategies.
- It is positive that topics are reviewed. There is scope here for further changes to be made as some topics are not suited to students who find learning challenging.

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 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.

*Published June 2014*