

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

**Coláiste Bríde,
Presentation Secondary School
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Roll number: 60122D**

Date of inspection: 13 May 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	12 and 13 May 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 nine class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with instances of excellent practice often in evidence.
- In almost all lessons observed, a positive classroom atmosphere and very good teacher-student rapport were strongly supportive of learning.
- A range of innovative and effective methodologies and resources was used to encourage student engagement with their learning.
- There is good whole-school support for History notwithstanding the need to enhance the uptake of History in the school's senior cycle programmes.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To promote student engagement with learning, greater attention should be paid to differentiation strategies such as differentiated questioning and written assignments, and wider use of cooperative learning.
 - Collaborative discussions on teaching and learning, at subject team level, including the pedagogy that underpins the teaching and study of History, should be documented in the subject plan.
 - Students should get frequent practice with extended writing assignments and regular formative feedback on this work should be given.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Bríde is an all-girls' voluntary secondary school, with a current enrolment of 966. It offers a range of programmes appropriate to the needs of its students including the Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good. In many of the lessons observed, instances of highly commendable practice were in evidence.
- The students' attentiveness and engagement attested to the good quality of their learning and contributed to the positive atmosphere for learning during the lessons visited.
- Most classrooms had desk arrangements conducive to collaborative learning and the extension of this practice to all history classrooms is encouraged.
- In almost all lessons observed, students were informed of the purpose of the lesson and the intended learning objectives that provided students with an understanding of the purpose of the lesson. The good practice of noting the learning intentions on the board or displaying them on screen along with the homework assignment was also in evidence in the majority of lessons.
- The learning outcomes were less frequently referred to as the lesson progressed or reviewed towards the end of the lesson. Such practices should be extended to all history lessons to ensure that students' learning is enhanced and consolidated.
- In many lessons observed, students were given the opportunity to be active in their own learning and it was in these lessons that students' enthusiasm for learning was most evident.
- In the best lessons, the setting of tasks that facilitated effective, independent and co-operative learning was observed. For example, in one lesson, students moved between different work stations, engaging with their peers and sharing their learning experiences. Such collaborative learning strategies should be shared and discussed at department level with a view to their wider integration into learning and teaching History across the school.
- Some very good deployment of historical documents was observed. In the best cases these were linked to key questions for students to explore in small groups, thus developing and encouraging historical analysis and reflection. This very good practice should be shared across the department.
- Differentiation is an area for development for the history team. Learning intentions, teaching methods, pace and content should be modified to suit the needs of students of different abilities. Further use of visuals is strongly urged to support students in their learning. It is recommended that subject department meetings be used to document and share practice on differentiated methodologies.
- In all lessons observed, homework was set and monitored which is commendable. However, students should be given more opportunity to complete extended writing tasks and receive regular formative feedback on this work. This will encourage students to evaluate and improve their own work.

- A very good emphasis on developing students' understanding of key terms and concepts was evident in all lessons. Student literacy was further supported by the display of subject-specific vocabulary lists in all classrooms.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good curricular provision for History. Students taking History at junior cycle are provided with three periods a week for History. Environmental and Social Studies (ESS) is taken by the remaining junior-cycle students. Leaving Certificate students have five class periods of History per week.
- There are good arrangements for students' access to the subject at Leaving Certificate level. Students are given an open choice of subjects and the option bands are arranged to accommodate as many students' choices as possible.
- There is a very good range of resources, including information and communications technology resources, available to teachers of History. Lessons are taught in teacher-based classrooms which facilitates the storage and display of resources.
- Historically, the uptake of history in senior cycle has been relatively low. Management and the history department should identify and implement strategies to encourage the uptake of Leaving Certificate History among senior-cycle students.
- Some very good co-curricular planning was in evidence. There is scope to enhance and extend this to help raise the profile of the subject in the school.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The good collaborative work of the history department is evidenced by the rotation of the position of subject co-ordinator and the convening of a formal departmental meeting each term.
- A subject department plan has been prepared and good progress in subject planning was evident. Schemes of work are available for each year group. By way of supporting the teachers' collaborative work and strengthening the subject plan, it is recommended that a section on teaching methodologies be incorporated into the template for the teachers' annual coursework plans. It is recommended that the section on the analysis of certificate examination results include details of their reflection on how the annual analysis informs teaching and learning.
- Recent discussions at whole school level, to move classes from the current banded system to a mixed ability setting at junior cycle, are very welcome in the context of facilitating teachers to collectively develop common assessment practices in house examinations and encouraging student uptake at the most appropriate level in the state examinations.
- Teaching, learning and assessment should be the main focus at department meetings so that members of the department can agree common targets for coverage and share good practice in teaching and learning. This will facilitate common papers differentiated for student access to reflect the diverse needs of students in the house examinations.
- Individual planning for lessons was very good.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the deputy principal/subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wishes to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The key findings and recommendations of the draft report which were available at the start of the school year as well as some other key points highlighted were extracted from the report and at a staff meeting were divided out among all of the staff to reflect and answer the following questions:

- What are the implications of this for teaching and learning?
- How can we promote the development of this practice/skill?

The purpose was to generate discussion, reflection and promote best practice advice among the entire staff. Feedback from the group work was shared with the staff and the work captured on the flip chart was captured on a spreadsheet promoting good practice as highlighted and suggested in the history report. The staff found this to be a beneficial exercise and a focussed way of reflecting on practice.

The History Department will follow up the recommendations given re collaborative planning, teaching methodologies and discussions. It is welcome to see that be peer observation which our AFL committee are promoting that staff can learn from each other and develop appropriate methodologies that promote student learning.

Strategies to develop differentiation methodologies will be promoted among all staff as part of continuous professional development, indeed many staff are very committed to further study options in a variety of ways.

The recommendation regarding analysis of certificate results to include reflection on how the annual analysis informs teaching and learning is a very practical suggestion and will be shared with all subject departments for follow up.

The Board of Management wishes to thank the Inspector for their positive engagement with staff.