

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of History
REPORT**

**Confey Community College
Leixlip, Co. Kildare
Roll number: 70691C**

Date of inspection: 27 September 2011



**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 HISTORY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	26-27 September 2011
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, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Very good quality teaching and learning were noted features of the history lessons observed.
- The teachers employed a variety of effective methodologies to support student learning.
- The students were attentive to their teachers, engaged well in the study of their lesson topic and contributed to the quality of the lessons.
- Whole-school support for History is very good.
- The history department facilitates collaborative planning and the development of History.
- Assessment and monitoring of student progress are actively pursued.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The opportunities for the individual members of the history team to teach senior cycle History to Transition Year (TY) and Leaving Certificate class groups should be increased.
 - Management and the history teachers should discuss and identify means of realising the full attendance of the team at formal departmental meetings as often as possible.
 - The history department plan including the annual schemes of work should be further developed.
-

INTRODUCTION

Confey Community College is a voluntary, co-educational secondary school with 714 students that is under the trusteeship of Co. Kildare VEC. History is a core subject for junior cycle students and an elective subject for Leaving Certificate students. History is a compulsory component of the school's optional TY programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very good quality teaching and learning were observed in the lessons visited.
- The teachers informed their students of the focus of the lesson at the outset and in almost all lessons the students were also informed of the intended learning outcomes. Individual teachers noted this information on the classroom board. These good practices provided the students with a clear understanding of the purpose of the lesson.
- The well-planned development of the lessons incorporated a variety of effective teaching and learning methodologies. For example, during the initial phase of the lessons, strategies such as the recapping on prior learning, the correction of homework, brainstorming and, the consolidation of students' understanding of key terms relating to the lesson topic effectively engaged the students and supported their learning.
- There was very good use of visual resources such as PowerPoint presentations, video clips and selected images to increase students' factual knowledge and understanding of the lesson content, key concepts and relevant terminology.
- Interaction with the students was used very effectively to guide and gauge learning. Individual teachers made good use of the classroom board to consolidate student learning by noting important points of information that emerged during the course of these interactions.
- There was good use of the class textbook to impact on student learning by reading selected material, by highlighting key points and by assigning directed reading as homework.
- The setting of tasks such as worksheet assignments, note-taking, pair work, and group work helped the students to consolidate their learning. The worksheet assignment was sometimes set as an ongoing task for the students to complete by requiring them to note particular points of information that were contained in the PowerPoint presentation shown to them during the course of their lesson or as a task that was linked to the viewing of a short video clip.
- The methodologies employed supported the development of the students' literacy skills. There were opportunities provided for the students to contribute orally to the class lesson, to listen and to develop their reading and writing skills.
- The students remained attentive to their teachers and engaged during the lessons. The good relationship between teachers and students was quite evident.
- The display of students' work and the teachers' practice of maintaining a print-rich environment in their classrooms, which in one instance was particularly striking, are also commendable practices that enhance the learning atmosphere.
- The teachers monitor their students' progress both informally and formally through classroom practices that include the correction of homework and class tests and by

recording and reviewing the students' performances in their formal school and certificate examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The study of History is accessible to all students.
- The timetabled allocation and distribution of History class periods support the subject.
- The seven members of the history team are all deployed to teach junior cycle History and three members teach the senior cycle history class groups. It is recommended that opportunities for a greater number of the history team to teach TY and Leaving Certificate History be provided in order to increase the expertise of the history team in teaching these programmes.
- The history teachers have a wide range of resources at their disposal that includes their own base classrooms and ICT technology. The teachers share a bank of teaching resources; an eResource facility has been provided for the teachers' use and additional purchases may be made with the approval of management.
- Meritorious students in History as in all the subject disciplines are publicly acclaimed for their achievements. The students' performances in the formal school and certificate examinations are also systematically tracked by management.
- Management facilitates formal meetings of the history department. There are however, logistical difficulties in facilitating the attendance of the entire team at formal departmental meetings. Management and the history team should discuss and identify means of realising this objective as often as is possible.
- In-service training is organised and accommodated; mentoring support is provided for student teachers.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The history department gives focused attention to collaborative planning. The position of subject convenor is rotated and formal meetings are held regularly. With regard to the latter, consideration could be given to inviting annually a representative of the learning support department to a meeting of the history department as a means of further strengthening the formal relationship between the history and the learning support departments.
- The history department plan is a commendable framework policy document that informs and supports the work of the history teachers. It is recommended that the continuing development of the plan include a section on the initiatives employed to develop the literacy and numeracy skills of history students, the strategies utilised to promote History, and the department's supportive mentoring practices regarding postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE) students.
- The planned schemes of the coursework for each year group reflect the teachers' commitment to teaching their students well. As a further means of supporting the development of the coursework plans it is recommended that the methodologies selected for teaching each topic be outlined.

- Following upon discussion of the overall performance of history students in the certificate examinations, the outcomes of the analysis of the trends observed should be documented in the appropriate section of the department plan. The consistently good performance of the history students when compared with national norms is noted.
 - The organisation of common history examinations for each year group where practicable during the formal Christmas and summer school examinations is a laudable collaborative practice. The organisation of co-curricular outings for the student to places of historical interest is also laudable.
 - The teachers' preparations for the lessons observed were very good. The prior planning included the selection, sourcing and preparation of supplementary resources to support student learning.
-

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; a response was not received from the board