

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Ardcoil na Tríonóide
Athy, County Kildare
Roll number: 68077S

Date of inspection: 22 October 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 HISTORY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	21-22 October 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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was either very good or good in the lessons observed.
- A variety of effective methodologies was used to support and consolidate learning.
- The students participated well in their lessons and frequently demonstrated the good quality of their learning.
- Teachers monitor the progress of their students well.
- There is very good whole-school support and provision for History.
- The history department actively supports the development of the teaching and study of History in the school.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- More widespread consistency should be established across the history department in relation to the recapitulation on the lesson objectives before the conclusion of the lesson, the emphasising of key words and the provision of written formative comments on homework assignments.
 - Current capacity within the history team to teach Leaving Certificate History should be increased.
 - The teachers' annual planned schemes of the coursework should be developed on a common template that outlines in respect of each coursework topic, the selected methodologies, resources, learning outcomes and modes of assessment.
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INTRODUCTION

Ardcoil na Tríonóide is a voluntary, co-educational secondary school with a current enrolment of 807 students. The curricular programmes offered include the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). TY is optional. The school is under the patronage of Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed and was very good in the majority of lessons. The positive and supportive atmosphere that typified all lessons was underpinned by good teacher-student relationships.
- The teachers engaged their students well at the start of lessons through established routines and strategies such as taking the roll, informing students of the focus of the lesson and the intended objectives, the correction of homework, and initial teacher exposition and instruction regarding the lesson topic.
- Purposeful interactions with students, which included good use of questioning, occurred at appropriate times throughout all lessons, for example, while recapping on prior learning, consolidating students' knowledge and understanding of new lesson material as the lesson developed, and monitoring students' progress when they were completing set tasks.
- There was very good use of supplementary resources, overall, to enhance the teaching and study of the subject of the lesson. These included information and communications technology (ICT), the board, textbooks and handouts. In a number of lessons students were directed to make written notes of important points of information and key terms when the aforementioned resources were used. It is recommended that more widespread use be made of this good practice to consolidate learning.
- The setting of independent and/or co-operative tasks was integrated well into most lessons and enabled the students to demonstrate their learning. A group work activity following upon the students' viewing of a video clip merited inclusion in one lesson and a greater allocation of time was required to fully complete the assigned co-operative task in another lesson.
- Development of the students' literacy skills was supported well by the variety of methodologies employed. However, there was scope to place greater emphasis on key words and reading in some lessons.
- Recapping on the lesson objectives before the lesson concludes is an area that requires more attention. This was either overlooked or required greater use of directed questions to ascertain students' achievement of the objectives in a number of lessons.
- The students remained attentive and participated well in their lessons. They were responsive to teachers' questions and frequently demonstrated the good quality of their learning. The sample of journals and copybooks that were reviewed during the evaluation also attested to the students' good application to their history coursework.
- Teachers monitor the progress of their students well by using a variety of assessment modes that includes classroom observation and interaction, correction of homework

assignments, and students' attainment in class tests and formal examinations. With regard to the correction of homework, it is recommended that the very good practice of individual teachers in regularly providing students with written formative comments for improvement be more firmly established across the history department.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support and provision for History. All junior cycle and TY students study History as a mandatory component of their curricular programmes. Established Leaving Certificate and LCVP students can elect to continue their study of History as an optional subject choice.
- The weekly timetabled allocation and distribution of history lesson periods are very supportive of the subject. A number of second-year class groups do, however, have a long interval between their last history lesson of the week and first history lesson of the following week. Such occurrences should be avoided, where possible within the constraints of the timetable.
- The eight members of the school's history team are all deployed to teach History and the teachers remain with their class groups until the students complete their curricular programme. These good practices are commended. It is recommended, however, that current capacity within the team to teach Leaving Certificate History be increased by affording greater opportunity for more team members to teach this coursework.
- The teaching and study of History is well resourced. Classrooms are equipped with ICT that has Internet access. The history department has been provided with a shared electronic folder and central storage facility for maintaining resource materials and a designated history noticeboard. The school library and, by arrangement, the computer room are also available to the teachers and their students.
- Management supports and encourages the continuing professional development of teachers and membership of their subject associations.
- Whole-school policies such as the homework and assessment policies inform best practices across subject departments. There are also well established procedures in place for formally assessing and reporting on students' progress.
- Field trips to places of historical interest are sanctioned and supported by management.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The history department actively supports the development of the subject as is evidenced, for example, by the rotation of the duties of co-ordinator, the minutes of the department's termly meetings, the ongoing development of the subject department plan and shared electronic folder, and the organisation of co-curricular outings.
- The history department plan attests to the good quality of the history teachers' collaboration. For example, details of agreed annual programmes of the coursework, the pedagogy that underpins the teaching and study of History and the setting of common assessments are contained in the plan. In supporting this good collaboration, it is recommended that the teachers' annual planned schemes of the coursework be developed on a common template that outlines in respect of each coursework topic, the selected methodologies, resources, learning outcomes and modes of assessment. Additional

sections should also be included in the plan relating to areas for subject improvement and how teachers' reflections on students' attainment in the certificate examinations inform subject planning and pedagogy.

- All lessons observed had a clearly planned development that incorporated a variety of effective methodologies to guide, gauge and consolidate learning.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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 is very pleased with the excellent report of the History inspection. The Board wishes to express its gratitude to the History department for their commitment to the teaching of History in the school. They would also like to thank the inspectorate for conducting the inspection and for making some very relevant recommendations.

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

1. A process has been initiated to assess and develop the homework policy in the school. It is envisaged that this will include:
 - recapitulation of lesson objectives/key words before the conclusion of all lessons.
 - the provision of informative comments on written assignments will be adapted school wide.
2. Management is currently examining opportunities to expand teaching capacity at senior cycle level for the teaching of History.
3. The school is actively promoting assessment for learning (AFL) methodologies which will further underpin the good practice evident in the History department.
4. The History department, in common with all other subject departments, are supplied with a breakdown of student attainment at certification examination level with a view to encouraging reflection and planning.
5. We are actively compiling a directory of history resources for Junior Cert. and Leaving Cert. courses.