

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Coláiste Pobail Setanta
Phibblestown, Clonee, Dublin 15
Roll number: 76098W

Date of inspection: 15 March 2012



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 of inspection	15 March 2012
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good.
- Differentiated methodologies were used effectively to support learning.
- There is strong whole-school support for History.
- Both management and the history teachers monitor the students' progress.
- The close collaboration of the history teachers underpins the good work of the history department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers be deployed to teach History to a wide mix of junior-cycle year groups rather than predominantly or solely one particular year group.
- The avoidance, where practicable, of a long interval between the last history lesson of the week and the first history lesson of the following week and the timetabling of a majority of a class's history lessons in afternoon time slots is recommended.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Pobail Setanta is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of Co. Dublin VEC. The school opened in 2008 and has a current enrolment of 400 students. The curricular programmes offered are the Junior Certificate, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). Transition Year (TY) is not currently provided.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good. The positive learning environment of the classrooms visited was evidenced by the commitment of the teachers to teaching their students well, the good relationship between the teachers and their students and the engagement of the students in their lessons. The classroom displays of visual materials and students' work also enhanced the learning atmosphere.
- Informing students of the learning objectives at the start or at an early stage of the lesson provided them with a good understanding of the purpose of the lesson.
- The differentiated teaching and learning methodologies that were employed contributed to the quality of the lessons. For example, the teachers recapped on prior learning during the initial phase of their lessons by utilising strategies such as targeted questions and laminated boards upon which students were directed to note information that they had learned. These strategies were effective in consolidating students' prior learning and in setting the context for the study of the lesson material. There was scope however, to give greater emphasis to the information that was least frequently noted by the students on their laminated boards in one lesson.
- As the lessons progressed differentiation was further incorporated into the planned development of the lessons through the good use made of resources and the tasks that students were set. These included PowerPoint presentations, a video clip, worksheets, peer presentations and pair work. The teachers also interacted with their students throughout the lessons and supported their progress in completing set tasks.
- Peer presentations occurred in two lessons and effectively supported learning. In one lesson each student made a PowerPoint presentation on a chosen aspect of the lesson topic that had previously been studied. In another lesson a student spoke about a famous explorer and the class was required to note a number of significant statements made about the explorer. By way of supporting the development of the good peer teaching observed, it is recommended that students also ask the presenter prepared questions in order to facilitate and strengthen their participation in this activity.
- The very good quality of students' learning was indicated by their knowledge of their coursework, their attention and application to classwork and the good quality of their written work.
- The development of students' literacy skills was well supported by the range of methodologies employed.
- The setting of homework was a feature of all lessons. The teachers regularly provide the students with written formative comments on their written work.

- The teachers remain well informed about the progress of their students through classroom observation and noting their students' application to their coursework and their achievements in school and certificate examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- History is a core subject for junior cycle students and is provided as an elective subject for Leaving Certificate students.
- The three members of the school's history team are all deployed to teach the subject. Some teachers are however, currently deployed to teach History predominantly or solely to the classes of a particular junior-cycle year group. It is recommended that the teachers be deployed to teach History to a greater mix of junior cycle year groups as this will enable them to have more frequently recurring contact with the entire coursework.
- History is well resourced. The teachers have their own base classrooms equipped with information and communication technology (ICT), a bank of supplementary resources and access to facilities such as the school library.
- The weekly timetabled provision for History is supportive of the subject. It is recommended that the timetabling of a majority of a class's history lessons in afternoon time slots and the occurrence of a long interval between the last history lesson of the week and the first history lesson of the following week be avoided where practicable.
- Whole-school policies on assessment and homework have been developed to inform best practice. Management also reviews subject department plans annually in order to support subject planning.
- Management organises in-service training for the teaching staff and accommodates teachers in attending in-service training relating to their subject specialisms.
- Management keeps informed about the progress of the students by systematically recording their performances in the formal school and certificate examinations.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The good work of the history department in supporting the development of the subject is underpinned by the effective collaboration of the history teachers. For example, the position of subject co-ordinator is rotated, regular meetings are convened and minuted, a TY history module is being planned and development of the subject department plan is maintained. The history teachers are also involved in a number of commendable initiatives to maintain high standards of teaching and learning in the history classroom.
- The history teachers engage in peer observation whereby each teacher visits the lessons of colleagues across a variety of disciplines. This commendable practice enables the history teachers to discuss their observations with colleagues, reflect upon them and share best practices.
- The history teachers established a history society in February 2011 as part of the school's Cumas programme which is an initiative to extend the learning of the school's gifted and talented students. The Society meets weekly and has appointed a historian in residence. The wide range of activities that are organised includes guest speakers, student presentations and visits to places of historical interest.

- The subject department plan informs the teaching and study of History in the school. By way of supporting the ongoing development of this good plan, it is recommended that the annual schemes of the coursework be further developed to include a more precise indicator of the timeline for studying the individual topics that form part of the major coursework topic e.g. Dictatorship and Democracy in Europe 1920-1945. The annual coursework schemes would also be strengthened by indicating the methodologies that are to be utilised for teaching each sub-topic.
- The lessons observed were all carefully planned and the required supplementary resources were ready in advance.

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.