

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of History  
REPORT**

**Pobalscoil Iosolde,  
Palmerstown  
Dublin 20  
Roll number:91302F**

**Date of inspection: 27 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	26 and 27 March 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching and learning was of a very good quality overall.
- Effective use of directed questioning, keyword charts and information and communications technology (ICT) supported lesson delivery.
- Very good modes of assessment are in place including frequent homework, the use of *Assessment for Learning* strategies, common testing and project work.
- Good co-curricular and extracurricular planning for the subject is evident.
- Curricular provision for the subject is good at senior cycle but is inadequate at junior cycle.
- Subject department planning is at an advanced stage. Medium and long term planning for the subject takes place regularly.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To support student literacy students should be given regular opportunities to undertake longer written assignments such as paragraph or essay-style questions both for homework and class work.
  - In any further curriculum review management should look at ways that curricular provision at junior cycle can be increased.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Pobalscoil Iosolde is a co-educational post-primary school. History is a core subject in junior cycle and is available as an option at Leaving Certificate level. History is optional in Transition year (TY). At the time of the evaluation there were 448 students enrolled in the school. The school is included in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) action plan.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the subject was very good.
- All lessons observed were well structured. In the majority of cases teachers introduced the lesson aims in writing at the start of the lesson and in some cases time was allocated at the end for review. It is recommended that these good practices are extended to all lessons.
- Very good links with prior learning were evident. Most lessons commenced with the review of the work of previous lessons and the correction of homework.
- Effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) was observed in classrooms visited. ICT resources such as film clips, PowerPoint presentations, audio clips and photographs were used to very good effect to support student learning.
- Lessons were purposeful and student enjoyment of learning was evident.
- Teaching was clear and concise in all cases. However, teachers should check that all information given is historically accurate when planning the lesson.
- Students were encouraged to be active in lessons observed. In many cases independent written work was undertaken in lessons. This should include sentences and paragraph-style questions as well as questions that require one or two word answers, in order to support student literacy.
- The use of pair work would have enhanced student learning in some cases
- Reference to keyword charts was a good support for student literacy in many lessons.
- Directed questioning was used to very good effect to include all students and to differentiate the lessons observed.
- Very good engagement with student assessment was evident. Students are tested regularly. Very good homework practices are in place.
- The use of formative assessment strategies in line with the school's homework policy, where students are given helpful feedback on their work, was noted across the department.
- Longer pieces of homework such as paragraph-style questions should be given regularly to all students as well as short-answer questions.
- It is positive that common examinations are in place in most instances.
- Students are encouraged to undertake history projects in first year. Many projects of a cross-curricular nature were in evidence. This is commended.
- Very good student-teacher relations were evident. Classroom management was very good in all lessons observed.

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

- Curricular provision for the subject is satisfactory at senior level. Leaving Certificate students have five class periods per week. History was recently introduced as a half yearly module into the TY programme following a curricular review and is proving popular. TY students have the satisfactory provision of three class periods per week.
- A recent review of junior cycle subjects led to an increase in provision for History. Junior cycle history students now have three class periods per week in third year. However, the provision of two class periods per week for first and second year students is still lower than average. It is recommended, in any future review, that management look at ways that curricular provision in History can be further increased.
- There is good provision of resources for History. All classrooms have up-to-date ICT resources such as a data projector and computer. History resources are stored on a history folder on the school system and teachers have been proactive in uploading resources to this folder. This is commended. As resources expand the department should ensure that resources are arranged in folders for years and topics.
- There is a very good emphasis on continuing professional development (CPD) in the school, including CPD on subject department planning. Teachers have been involved in professional development for the subject such as engagement with the subject association.
- An assessment policy is in place with a good emphasis on formative assessment. The school has also formulated a homework policy. It is suggested that members of the department adapt this policy to meet the needs of their own subject.
- Students have access to, and are encouraged to take higher level papers in certificate examinations. There are very good assessment outcomes in most instances. However, care should be taken to enter students for certificate examinations at an appropriate level commensurate with their ability to achieve at that level.
- Good co-curricular and extracurricular planning for the subject was evident. History field trips take place regularly. There are good co-curricular links in place between the CSPE, Art and Metalwork department. The Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) team collaborate well with the history department in supporting the delivery of the history programme.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Department planning for the subject is at an advanced stage. Regular meetings of the department take place. A coordinator has been appointed. This position rotates frequently.
- There is a wide range of planning documents in the subject planning folder including a range of relevant policy documents. The subject plan itself includes comprehensive schemes of work and detailed sections on assessment and differentiation.
- Medium and long-term planning for the subject is in place indicating a high level of reflection and collaboration in the department. Action planning following previous inspection reports is one such indicator of this good level of collaboration.
- Planning for common assessment is ongoing. Good attention to differentiation in assessment was evident. An inclusive learning atmosphere was evident.

- The history department should look at ways that it can continue to promote the subject in the school. A PowerPoint presentation aimed at prospective Leaving Certificate students and a history notice board are suggested as two ways that this could be achieved.

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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.