

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Inver College
Carrickmacross, County Monaghan
Roll number: 72180K

Date of inspection: 9 March 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

Date of inspection	8 & 9 March 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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good with aspects of very good practice evident in several lessons.
- An attractive and stimulating learning environment has been created in the main history room.
- While an effective balance of teacher-student input was observed in a minority of lessons where students were involved in collaborative tasks, teacher-led instruction was the dominant pedagogical approach.
- Homework is assigned regularly and formative comments, which praised and provided support to students on further improvements, were evident in copybooks.
- Whole-school support for History is very good and uptake of the subject is good, particularly at senior cycle.
- Very good co-curricular planning was evident in the involvement of a number of subject departments in preparation for whole-school commemorative events of 1916.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Further integration of student-centred approaches to learning is required to appropriately challenge students in mixed-ability classes.
 - Teachers should discuss and share how they support students of varying abilities in mixed-ability classes.
 - The subject plan should take a more developmental approach which would reflect good classroom practice and focus on student progress.
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INTRODUCTION

Inver College offers the full range of curricular programmes: the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The current enrolment is 354 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning observed during the evaluation was good with aspects of very good practice evident in several lessons.
- An attractive and stimulating learning environment has been created in the main history room. This includes the display of student work with models of Neolithic structures, project work and a variety of historical posters.
- Student participation in classroom activities was closely monitored by teachers, who circulated and supported their learning where needed. Enjoyment of the subject was evident, particularly in senior-cycle lessons.
- Teacher-led instruction was the dominant methodology in the lessons observed. Where a more effective balance of teacher-student input was achieved, students were involved in collaborative tasks. The integration of more student-centred approaches in planning for lessons is recommended.
- Very good learning was evident in one lesson where students were reviewing primary sources. Each pair of students had a different source and were challenged to assess and make judgements using the same set of questions; this particular approach provided very good differentiated learning opportunities. Teachers should discuss and share how they support students of varying abilities in mixed-ability classes.
- Whole-class questioning strategies were good. In the majority of classes, teachers selected students to answer and were affirming of their contribution. This good practice should be broadened to include greater use of open-ended questions, increased wait-time, and peer discussion to foster deeper historical understanding.
- In a minority of lessons, group work was a positive feature. It was noteworthy that key concepts and terms formed the focus of one such task, which was followed by extension questions to challenge students' understanding of the period in Irish history.
- In TY, there was an emphasis on class discussion and project work. Students used mini-white boards to express whether they agreed or disagreed with propositions. This type of *assessment for learning* strategy was effective in stimulating class discussion and merits further use.
- Homework is assigned regularly and formative comments, which praised and provided support to students on further improvements, were evident in copybooks. However, there is scope for teachers to incorporate time into their lessons for students to review their work in response to this advice.
- As part of a whole-school approach to improving literacy, there was a good emphasis on students' understanding of key concepts and terms in all lessons. In the main history

room, there was a literacy and numeracy noticeboard. Timelines and key words associated with periods in history were also displayed.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for History is very good and weekly timetable provision for the subject is appropriate. History and Geography alternate as core subjects each year. When History is core, all junior-cycle students have three periods of history each week. In alternate years, when History is an optional subject, all students in first year sample the subject before making their final choices. Uptake of History at senior cycle is very good.
- All classrooms are well equipped with information and communication technology (ICT) facilities including data projectors. There is also a computer room that can be accessed through a booking system.
- Management is very supportive of teachers' professional development and is open to the purchase of resources. Currently, there is an extensive collection of historical books, DVDs and videos stored in the main history room to support student engagement with History.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The position of co-ordinator is rotated and history department meetings are held regularly. It is good practice that minutes of meetings are recorded. However, in order to promote development and improvement, teaching and learning methods should be discussed at department meetings.
 - The subject plan gives a good overview of the provision for History. However, this plan should be reviewed to take a more developmental approach that would reflect good classroom practice and focus on student progress. For example, the schemes of work should be expanded to reflect classroom practice, and learning outcomes should be specified and linked to methodologies, resources and modes of assessment.
 - The history department conducts an annual analysis of certificate examination results and identifies targets for improvement. However, no actions relating to classroom practice were evident in the subject plan. In order to support the achievement of the agreed targets, it is recommended that the department also discuss and implement actions related to teaching and learning.
 - The TY plan provided a good indication of the areas of study. However, expansion of this plan is recommended in order to focus on the key skills to be developed such as oral presentation and research skills.
 - Very good co-curricular planning was evident with the involvement of a number of subject departments such as History, Irish, Music and Home Economics in preparations for whole-school commemorative events of 1916 involving songs, narrations, food and a flag ceremony.
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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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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