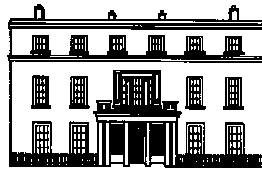


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Saint Vincent's Christian Brothers Secondary School
Glasnevin, Dublin 11
Roll number: 60400F

Date of inspection: 6 May 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	5 & 6 May 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students• Meeting with subject coordinator	<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

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good in lessons observed, with aspects of very good practice frequently in evidence.
- Some very good collaborative student activities were observed.
- Students' written work showed a very good level of teacher monitoring.
- Students' historical literacy was strongly reinforced by teachers' deliberate focus on key words in line with the whole-school approach evident in DEIS planning.
- While there were displays of student work on some corridors, there is scope to create a more learner-friendly environment within each classroom.
- Commendably, whole-school DEIS targets have been integrated into the subject plan and teachers have identified how the actions relating to these targets are supported by the teaching and learning of History.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The subject department should review the approach to how students record homework.
- The TY plan should be expanded to include a greater focus on the key skills and learning outcomes which teachers wish their students to achieve.

INTRODUCTION

Saint Vincent's C.B.S is an all-boys voluntary secondary school under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The school offers a range of curricular programmes: the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP); an optional Transition Year (TY); Leaving Certificate; and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The current enrolment is 378 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good in lessons observed, with aspects of very good practice frequently in evidence.
- In all lessons, classroom atmosphere was characterised by very good standards of behaviour with respectful interactions between teachers and students.
- Lessons were well structured with teachers adopting an approach whereby they share the learning intentions with students at the start of lessons. This was most effective when the learning intentions were expressed in terms of what students should be able to do and they were reviewed at the end of the lesson to assess student progress.
- Some very good collaborative student activities were observed. For example in one lesson, students worked in groups to identify information from primary sources. To increase their engagement and support the development of historical skills, the teacher prepared a worksheet around the '5w's' learning frame and questions relating to historical concepts such as bias. To enhance students' responsibility for learning from this activity, different roles for group members could be assigned.
- Questioning strategies were good, with teachers using a mix of directed questioning and one-to-one interactions with students in class. For example in one lesson, a comparative approach was taken, using images of key personalities from Northern Ireland with the frequent asking of 'why' questions to support students' to develop their answers further and make judgements. However, in the majority of lessons there was scope for a deeper assessment of students' understanding and to give students sufficient time to formulate their answers.
- In the majority of lessons observed, students were given opportunities to engage with material collaboratively. For example, a sorting exercise was used to challenge students' understanding of the Early Christian and Medieval Church and to revise previous learning by sorting and identifying key facts relating to each period through peer discussion.
- In another lesson, a strong emphasis was placed on encouraging students to make notes for themselves and students were asked to explain material in their own words. A worksheet was used well to support students to continue reading and discerning what was important. This type of collaborative approach to learning shifted the focus and responsibility for learning more firmly onto the students and merits further use.
- It was evident from student copybooks that there is a very good level of teacher monitoring of student work. This is accompanied by supportive formative comments on assignments which gave students written feedback on areas of improvements.
- Student journals showed that there are inconsistencies in the recording of homework. It is recommended that the department review their approach to how homework is assigned in order to address this.

- It is good practice that project work is used as an assessment tool in junior cycle and TY and the marks awarded form part of the school examinations. Teachers are also exploring self-assessment strategies such as reflection cards to promote the use of peer and self-assessment.
- Students' historical literacy was strongly reinforced by teachers' deliberate focus on key words, which is in line with the whole-school approach evident in DEIS planning. In one lesson, students used a keyword journal to record this work. Teachers should review the effectiveness of using a keyword journal and share pedagogical approaches in this area to further support the development of historical literacy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Strong support for History across the school is evidenced by the subject being a core subject in both junior cycle and TY, and part of an open subject choice for Leaving Certificate.
- Weekly timetable provision for History is in line with good practice.
- School management is very supportive of teachers' continuing professional development.
- While there were displays of student work on some corridors, the student-based classrooms had little visual display or stimuli. There is scope to create a more learner-friendly environment within each classroom.
- Senior management is supportive of team teaching in some junior cycle History lessons; this approach should be monitored and reviewed regularly to evaluate the effectiveness on student learning.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A collaborative, collegial approach to subject planning for History was evident. A coordinator is in place and this position rotates annually. Regular meetings are held three to four times a year and minutes are recorded.
- In all lessons, high-quality electronic presentations were used to guide and structure lessons. Teachers also prepared a very good range of supplementary resources such as handouts, worksheets and video clips.
- The history department has collated an impressive shared folder of electronic resources which supports a collaborative approach to teaching and assessment. These resources should be linked to the subject plan and common schemes of work.
- Commendably, whole-school DEIS targets have been integrated into the subject plan and teachers have identified how the actions relating to these targets are supported by the teaching and learning of History.
- A good range of topics is covered in TY and the subject plan provided an indication of these areas of study. Expansion of this plan to include expected learning outcomes, a variety of assessment modes and references to key skills, such as research skills, to be developed throughout the course for students is recommended.
- The history department conducts an annual analysis and review of certificate examination results. To benefit from this good practice, it is recommended that the department identify

specific actions related to teaching and learning that would support improvements and include these in their planning documentation.

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.

Published September 2016