



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: History Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Coláiste na Toirbhirte
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Árd Aoibhinn Bandon Co Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62061T
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	08/02/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	13/05/2024

What is a subject inspection?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspector(s) evaluated learning and teaching in History under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	08/02/2024
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Coláiste na Toirbhirte is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education An Irish Schools' Trust (CEIST). The school offered the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme, and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). The enrolment at the time of the evaluation was 436 students.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment were very good overall.
- The learning activities chosen by teachers were student-centred, well-planned and provided learners with a platform for their developing and new learning.
- In focus groups students readily spoke about the value they placed on the gathering of history knowledge.
- Subject provision and whole school support for History was very good.
- A culture of improvement in the History department was evident in discussions with the subject co-ordinator.
- Teachers' individual planning and their collaborative department planning were very good.

Recommendations

- The assessment of student progress during lessons was primarily through teacher questioning, which included cold-calling students and the use of open-ended questions. Using a more broad mix of formative assessment strategies should be the focus of the History department and form part of the development of a wider approach to the use of questioning in all lessons.
- Though learning intentions were referred to in all lessons, they were often only referred to at the beginning of lessons. The History department should develop a consistent and clear approach to how learning intentions are used and revisited in lessons with a particular emphasis on revisiting learning intentions throughout the planned activities.
- Digital technology was used by students to submit assignments and post homework tasks. History teachers should ensure that students use digital technologies more

effectively to support their learning in History and to develop research skills through concentrating on investigating the job of the historian, and on investigating digital repositories of historical evidence, archives and exhibitions, in line with the junior cycle specification.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good overall. In all lessons teachers used strategies which activated students' prior knowledge and learning and this approach enabled learning to progress.
- The learning activities designed by teachers were student-centred, well-planned and provided learners with a platform for their developing and new learning. The positive rapport between teachers and students, that was established in all lessons, contributed to an atmosphere of learning observed in history lessons which aided learning through teacher encouragement and affirmation of student contributions.
- History teachers' subject and pedagogical knowledge was very good and directly reflected in the engagement of students. The use of primary and secondary history sources and the use of keywords in history learning were embedded in lessons and supported the use of Strand 1 of the junior cycle History specification (The Nature of History).
- In focus groups students readily spoke about the value they placed on the gathering of history knowledge. They pointed to the progression of learning from primary school, into junior cycle, through TY and into senior cycle. They talked about this progression in terms of depth of understanding, of broadening their exposure to history in the wider world and locally in junior years, to the narrowing necessary for the detail expected at senior cycle.
- There was a good balance between teacher and student talk, with students given opportunities to work in pairs and in groups to complete research and examine the history they were studying. Teachers often gave particular attention to the setting of students in these groups. Students were often afforded opportunities to think independently and to engage in peer-to-peer feedback within their groups.
- The assessment of student progress during lessons was primarily through teacher questioning, which included cold-calling students and the use of open-ended questions. Students in focus groups mentioned the use of show-me boards in lessons as another methodology which they used but which was not observed by the inspector. Using a more broad mix of formative assessment strategies should be the focus of the History department and form part of the development of a wider approach to the use of questioning in all lessons. This could be advanced through peer observation and by collaboratively developing a department approach for moving from lower to higher order questions. The National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) Focus of Learning Workshop booklet on Effective Questioning should form part of the development of a wider approach to the use of questioning students.
- Though learning intentions were referred to in all lessons, they were often only referred to at the beginning of lessons. The use of learning intentions is important for students in order that they can see the progression through a unit of learning, and between units of learning. The History department should develop a consistent and clear approach to how learning intentions are used and revisited in lesson with a particular emphasis on

revisiting learning intentions throughout the planned activities. The NCCA Focus on Learning Workshop booklet on Learning Intentions and Success Criteria should be used by the department and a particular emphasis on revisiting learning intentions throughout the learning activities should be planned for.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Subject provision and whole school support for History was very good. Both external and internal continuing professional development (CPD) was fully facilitated by management.
- Timetabling was appropriate at both junior and senior cycle and students were provided with two periods of TY history in an eight-week module. Senior students noted in focus groups that this work was a good preparation for their learning at leaving certificate.
- The co-ordination of the subject was rotated between History teachers. This is good practice, as it builds professional capacity within the department. A culture of improvement in the History department was evident in discussions with the subject co-ordinator.
- Learning environments were stimulating and engaging. The classrooms visited were text and display rich in history materials, giving students plenty of support in the room and making the classrooms subject specific. Although some student work was on display in these classrooms, further examples could be put on view as this is a key feature of junior cycle History classroom-based assessment 1 (CBA1).
- It was notable that as part of the school self-evaluation (SSE) process, teachers' feedback to students had been identified as an area of focus. Also, it was reported that in recent months the school had internal CPD on how action verbs can be linked to feedback. The highlighting of action verbs in learning intentions and in planning was worthy of some further consideration for History teachers, as was the use of the specification for junior cycle history, as the language of the specification and the language of assessment mirror each other.
- The use of digital devices and digital technology was good overall. Teachers had access to devices for student use in lessons and the school has an Information technology (IT) lab. The school had a digital platform which was used for sharing class notes, and for students to submit assignments and post homework tasks. The History department should now consider the level at which students engage in the use of digital technology for the purposes of learning in History and should concentrate on investigating the job of the historian and on investigating digital repositories of historical evidence, archives and exhibitions, in line with the junior cycle specification.

3. Planning and preparation

- Teachers' individual and collaborative department planning was very good and students were placed at the centre of lesson plans which were well prepared.
- The History department's emphasis on teacher collaboration with regard to planning was discussed with the co-ordinator. Teachers' collaborative planning should now focus on methodologies for questioning and feedback to improve the learning experience and outcomes for all students. The plan should also have space for teacher reflection to improve and adapt the plan where necessary. Further consideration should be given to the inclusion of the junior cycle specification's learning outcomes in lessons, as they appear in departmental plans.

- The Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings' notes were a welcome addition to the planning documents and provided a guide to teachers for collaborative work. It is also important to compile a set of norms for these meetings, and to place them on file, so that the meetings can be held in the same way year-on-year. In addition, necessary time should be included for the completion of CBA2 in 3rd year. SLAR notes mentioned a 'practice CBA'. The department should instead introduce the aspects of teaching, learning and assessment associated with CBAs, such as researching, displaying and reflecting, in first and second year lessons in advance of the CBA windows.

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.



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

A summary report for the students of Coláiste na Toirbhirte about their learning in History

08/02/2024

What kind of inspection did your school have?



Recently, an inspector called to your school to carry out a subject inspection. The inspector visited some classes and had a talk with the principal and teachers. They also met with a focus group of students who study History. The inspector wanted to hear what the focus group of students had to say about their learning experience in that subject.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



The inspector saw many things during the inspection. The main findings were:

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment were very good overall.
- The activities chosen by teachers provided learners with a platform for their learning.
- In focus groups students readily spoke about the value they placed in the gathering of history knowledge.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in History?



- The History department should develop a wider approach to questioning.
- The History department should revisit learning intentions throughout the lessons.
- The History department should consider student engagement in the use of digital technology.

**Thank you for taking the time to read this report.
A special thank you to the students who participated in the focus
group.**

The Inspectorate's Quality Continuum

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	Provision that is very good is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The history department agree that the recent history inspection was a very positive experience providing each member with valuable feedback on their learning, classroom methodologies and forms of assessment.

Students who attended the focus group sessions and whose classrooms were visited by the Inspector noted how excited they were to demonstrate their learning and engagement with the subject. Student focus groups are a welcome addition to the process supporting the dynamic work of the history department.

The History Team noted that the recent inspection gave them an opportunity to demonstrate their passion for the subject and their dedication to providing quality education.

Overall, the recent history inspection was an affirming and positive experience. This was not withstanding the fact that the History Inspection occurred during an exceptionally busy period of the year.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

As history teachers, implementing inspectorate recommendations is crucial to enhancing the quality of education we provide.

1. Teaching, Learning & Assessment

The first recommendation focuses on more effective questioning techniques. To achieve this, we plan to:

- integrate a variety of questioning strategies into our lessons including open-ended questions to encourage critical thinking.
- To include probing questions to delve deeper into topics and reflective questions to consolidate learning.
- We will incorporate some of the useful examples from the NCCA workshop booklet on effective questioning.

By incorporating these techniques, we aim to create a dynamic classroom environment where students are actively engaged in discussion and challenged to think analytically about historical events and concepts.

The second recommendation focused on the importance of referring to the learning intentions throughout the lesson.

- We will begin each lesson by clearly articulating the learning intentions and success criteria for each class.
- Throughout each class we will endeavour to refer back to these intentions, reinforcing their relevance to the content being taught and connecting them to students' prior knowledge and understanding.
- Additionally, we will encourage students to reflect on their progress towards meeting the learning intentions, feedback and guidance to support their learning journey as outlined in the NCCA booklet.

By making learning intentions a central focus of every class we aim to enhance student engagement motivation and achievement ultimately fostering a deeper and more meaningful understanding of historical concepts and themes.

2. Subject Provision and Whole School Support.

The third recommendation emphasises the need for greater access to digital technology for our students.

- In response we plan to integrate digital resources and tools into our history curriculum and classes in a more comprehensive and detailed way to enhance the learning experience for students.
 - This may include utilising educational websites, multimedia presentations, interactive timelines and online research databases to provide students with diverse sources of information and opportunities for hands on learning.
 - Additionally, we will ensure that our classrooms are equipped with the necessary technology to facilitate digital learning activities.
3. Planning and Preparation
- In response to the recommendation, our Dept plans to move away from practice CBAs and to move towards the introduction of aspects of teaching, learning and assessment associated with CBAs, such as researching, displaying and reflecting, in first and second year lessons in advance of the CBA window.

In conclusion we would like to thank the inspectorate for their recommendations and will continue to create a dynamic and engaging learning environment that fosters critical thinking, inclusivity and technological literacy.