An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of History
REPORT

Templemichael College,
Longford
Roll number: 71730O

Date of inspection: 25 October 2012

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN HISTORY

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	25 October 2012
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and teachers • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was good.
- All lessons were well-structured and teacher preparation for lessons was satisfactory.
- A supportive classroom atmosphere was evident and teacher-student relations were very good.
- In all lessons observed relevant links made to student experience helped develop student understanding of the topics being covered.
- Frequent homework, which is regularly corrected, and good journal practices support teaching and learning in the subject.
- Curricular provision for the subject is poor and in many cases history classes are timetabled too closely together.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teacher delivery should be carefully paced and students should be afforded independent or collaborative learning opportunities in lessons.
- Students should get frequent practice at writing paragraph-style questions and frequent formative feedback on this work should be given.
- Management should look at ways in which the curricular provision for History could be increased.
- Subject department planning should be advanced and the yearly schemes of work should be agreed among members of the department.

INTRODUCTION

Templemichael College is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of Co. Longford Vocational Educational Committee. History is a core subject in junior cycle but is not available as an option at Leaving Certificate level. The Transition Year Programme is not provided in the school. At the time of the evaluation there were 106 post-primary students enrolled. The school also provides courses for a number of Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) students. 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 lessons observed was good.
- There was a very good classroom atmosphere in lessons, student-teacher relations were supportive and classroom management was effective.
- Teachers were well-prepared for lessons and all lessons had a clear structure. In one lesson the proposed learning outcomes of the lesson were placed on the board at the start of the lesson and a review took place at the end. These good practices should be extended to all lessons.
- A range of resources were used in lessons including the textbook, the classroom board, an e-book and a PowerPoint presentation. Visual material should be regularly used to help develop understanding of the topics being covered.
- In all lessons observed, links made to student experience supported student learning and helped add interest and variety to lessons.
- Very effective questioning including the use of "wait time" and strong classroom routines were noted in one lesson observed. This lesson would have been further enhanced if students had been given an opportunity to engage in independent or collaborative learning later in the lesson.
- In one classroom visited the material was covered at too fast a pace and there was an imbalance between teacher talk and student input. Care should be taken to involve students in the lesson through the use of questioning and to allow students time on their own or in groups to process the material being taught.
- Students get frequent homework which is monitored regularly, mostly by dating and ticking students' work. It is recommended that this homework should include frequent examples of extended writing assignments from first year and that students are given helpful feedback on how to improve their work.
- A high percentage of students take the ordinary level junior certificate history paper. It is positive that teachers are hoping to increase the percentage of students undertaking higher level History. It is suggested that teachers should mark the work of third year students, at both levels, according to examination criteria and share those criteria with students. This should be helpful in raising the overall standard of students' work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Curricular provision for the subject is significantly lower than average. At the time of the evaluation, first year students had three class periods per week while second and third

year students had two class periods per week. It is recommended that management seek to increase curricular provision for the subject to bring it more in line with the provision offered in the majority of post-primary schools.

- A review of timetables indicated that second and third year classes have the two history periods timetabled on two consecutive days. It is recommended that every attempt be made to spread timetabled history classes across the week.
- History has not been available as a subject to Leaving Certificate students in the school for some years. It is recommended that restoring the subject as an option for Leaving Certificate students should be a long-term aim of teachers and management.
- A team of two teachers teach the subject. Teachers are well-qualified and dedicated to the best needs of their students. For example, teachers often provide extra lessons in the subject for students.
- Provision of resources for the subject is good. Both teachers stressed that management is open to the provision of resources. A number of electronic resources have been prepared by teachers. This is commended. A folder for the subject should be placed on the school's electronic system and teachers should upload newly created resources to this folder on a regular basis.
- History trips are facilitated by management, for example, students are brought on trips to the National Museum at Collins Barracks in Dublin.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- History departmental planning is in its initial stages. Departmental meetings are held regularly. These are minuted. Both teachers are relatively new to the department and both share co-ordination of the subject.
- A subject plan has been prepared. It is commendable that a section on special educational needs and the junior certificate school programme (JCSP) has been included.
- Separate termly schemes of work for the two teachers were presented to the inspector. It is positive that, in some cases, these were linked to proposed learning outcomes, methodologies and resources. The above good practice should be extended to all schemes of work. Schemes for each year group should be available in the subject folder.
- In the third year scheme of work it was noted that the first few months of the school year are spent on the revision of first and second year topics, leaving limited time for the coverage of new material. One substantial topic on twentieth century Irish history is covered to some extent in second year but is not revised in third year. These practices do not adequately support students attempting the higher level paper and should be reviewed.
- It is recommended that schemes of work are agreed between teachers and that adequate time is planned for the coverage and revision of all topics. All teachers should follow the agreed schemes of work. If there are two or more class groups in any year group, a common test paper should be set.
- Minutes of subject department meetings show good short-term planning. Good whole-school planning for the attainment of DEIS targets was also evident. It is positive that an analysis of examination results is undertaken at school level.

- It is recommended that long-term planning for improvement is also undertaken by the subject department. Targets should be set, for example in the area of examination attainment, and strategies agreed to reach those targets.
- Good teacher record keeping was evident and good journal practices support teaching and learning in the subject.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Published March 2013.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Templemichael College welcomes the Subject Inspection of History Report.

They would also like to take this opportunity to thank the Inspector for her contribution and professional courtesy during her visit to Templemichael College.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Board accepts the recommendations of the Inspectorate and is fully committed to addressing them. The curricular provision for History has been increased for Junior Cert.

The History planning department are working on agreeing the yearly schemes of work.