



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: History Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Meanscoil Naomh Ioseph
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Presentation Secondary School Castleisland Co. Kerry
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	61260U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	16/10/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	23/01/2025

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.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

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.

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>
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.	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	16/10/2024
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and key staff • Interaction with students, including focus groups	• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Mean Scoil Naomh Ioseph, or Presentation Secondary School, is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). At the time of the evaluation the school had an enrolment of 242 students. The school offered the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE).

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Teaching, learning and assessment was good with very good approaches in some lessons.
- In junior cycle lessons, teachers included aspects of local history in all lessons on Irish history.
- Teachers made very good use of primary sources during lessons.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for the subject was very good.
- The efforts made to promote History within the school, and among students, were very effective.
- The quality of department planning was good, and, overall, teachers' individual preparation was detailed and comprehensive.

Recommendations

- In a small number of lessons, learning intentions were not used to guide the progress of the lesson. Therefore, some further attention should be given to the standardisation of the effective use of learning intentions across the subject department.
- Collaboration between students in lessons was limited, as were options for them to explore and share their knowledge with their peers. It is recommended that teachers explore the use of think/pair/share to build on individual contributions by encouraging collaboration and the presentation of students' ideas.
- The focus of the History subject plan was primarily on course content, while planning for individual lessons placed an emphasis on effective teaching and learning. To further align the History Department plan with the work undertaken in lessons, planning documents should more clearly include teaching and learning strategies.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Teaching, learning and assessment was good with very good approaches in some lessons.
- The subject and pedagogical knowledge of teachers was very good. Their command of subject-specific information, and the way they managed the classrooms were very effective. How lessons began was an indication of this skill. The basis of almost all opening phases of lessons was the gathering and exploring of students' prior knowledge. This gave lessons a definite link to the previous lesson, or to previous units of learning. Using prompts provided by teachers, students were well supported in exploring the knowledge they had gained thus far.
- In junior cycle lessons, teachers included aspects of local history in all lessons on Irish history. This was an impressive and distinguishing feature of the teaching and learning in those lessons. The emphasis on the local went beyond the intersection with classroom-based assessment 1 (CBA1) where it was explicitly planned for.
- Learning intentions were widely used across all lessons observed. They were displayed throughout the lessons and returned to in most lessons. Their use was important for giving guidance to students as to the intended learning in those lessons. The rapport between teachers and students ensured that students more clearly understood the structure of the intended learning. However, in a small number of lessons, though the learning intentions were displayed, they were not used to guide the progress of the lesson. Therefore, some further attention should be given to the standardisation of the use of learning intentions in all lessons. To achieve this History teachers should use the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA) *Focus on Learning Workshop on Learning Intentions and Success Criteria*.
- Learning experiences were designed to engage students as contributors and listeners in most lessons, and it was clear that most students enjoyed these lessons. However, students needed further opportunities to be active in their learning. Students in a focus group described History as a subject where they listened more than contributed. Therefore, the balance between teacher and student talk should be addressed.
- Collaboration between students in lessons was also limited, as were options for them to explore and share their knowledge with their peers. Opportunities should be planned for students to take control of the progress of their learning. It is recommended that, as a beginning strategy, teachers explore the use of think/pair/share to build on individual contributions by encouraging collaboration and the presentation of students' ideas.
- Teachers made very good use of primary sources during lessons. These primary sources gave important context to the learning being explored. Students were able to put their knowledge of primary sources to use in the work they completed for Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs). Students in a focus group spoke of the positive experiences they had when they were researching during CBA work for junior cycle students. The latter were completed as displays in most cases, though some were not. To align with the *Junior Cycle History Guidelines for the Classroom-Based Assessment* published by the NCCA, the History department should move to the display of all student work.

- Within the school more broadly the gathering of keywords had been connected to exploring English as an Additional Language (EAL) and teachers had received support for the teaching of EAL, including advice on teaching keywords in subject areas. History teachers had incorporated this whole school initiative into their teaching and learning. The planning for the use of keywords should also inform a stronger engagement with the language of the Junior Cycle History specification. As the use of learning outcomes and action verbs from the Specification was limited, History teachers should endeavour to include the specification in lesson planning and delivery, and to make links between this language and the language of assessment.
- In lessons, the primary method of assessing student progress was the use of questioning. Strategies focussed on cold calling in some lessons and in others on students responding with a show of hands. While in their context these strategies were largely successful, to further benefit all students in lessons, teachers should explore the combining of these techniques in planning for student assessment and engagement.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for the subject was very good.
- The school's leadership provided support for teachers' professional learning both within the school, and in conjunction with support services. The focus of the School Improvement Plan (SIP) had been on the development of digital tools and support for digital learning. On the timetable, first year and second year students were taught together in two combined groups. This arrangement should be kept under review and adjusted if practicable. There were two groups of History students in third year.
- The efforts made to promote History within the school, and among students, were very effective. The teachers supported students in entering competitions, both local and national, and with a visit to the county museum. The visit of an archaeologist to the school and a guided tour of a medieval town were particularly appropriate for junior cycle students. The school marked Holocaust Memorial Day and International Women's Day. The schools' yearbook also included contributions from History students.
- Teachers used their own rooms for lessons. This allowed them to display student work and History-related materials. The emphasis in teaching and learning on local history suited the emphasis of CBA1 on local history, and, as is appropriate, this extended to the heritage of students across Europe and the wider world.
- The use of the school's digital platform for teaching and learning was very effective. It was used for the sharing of resources with students. The school had a bring your own device procedure in place for use at times in lessons, and for access to the shared platform in school, and at home. There was some use of a computer room and a trolley of laptops for CBA work. In a focus group students said their use of the platform varied and that they accessed digital supports in some other subjects more often than they did in History. Given that students identified skills learned in History lessons which were transferable between subjects, the exploration of the further use of digital supports should be a focus for the subject department.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of department planning was good, and overall teachers' individual preparation was detailed and comprehensive.

- The structures put in place in lessons allowed students to explore history, both in the bigger picture and in close detail. In a focus group, students themselves noted that history was about the lives people have lived and are living. However, the focus of the History subject plan was primarily on course content while planning for individual lessons placed an emphasis on effective teaching and learning. To further align the History Department plan with the work undertaken in lessons, planning documents should more clearly include teaching and learning strategies. One suggested approach to connect lesson planning and department plans was to allow time and space for teacher reflection on units of learning as they are completed.
- For transition year students, learning in the subject area was presented as part of Cultural History, with an individual presentation by students on the history and culture of an area of their choice, worldwide or local.

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

For the students of Meanscoil
Naomh Ioseph about their learning
in **History**

Date of inspection:

16/10/2024

What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in **History**.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



- Teaching, learning and assessment was good with very good examples in some lessons.
- In junior cycle lessons, teachers included local history in all lessons on Irish history.
- Teachers made very good use of primary sources during lessons.
- The efforts made to promote History were very effective.

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



- Learning intentions should be used more clearly in all lessons.
- Teachers should explore the use of think/pair/share to allow students to be more involved in lessons.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
Special thanks 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