

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in Spanish**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Loreto College Foxrock
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Foxrock Dublin 18
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60240J

**Date of Inspection: 18-05-2017**



**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 evaluated learning and teaching in Spanish under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Date of inspection</b>	18-05-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Loreto College Foxrock is a fee-charging school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust with a current enrolment of 556 girls. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the new Junior Cycle, the established Leaving Certificate and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. Spanish can be studied alongside French up to Leaving Certificate.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some areas for development.
- Student learning would have been enhanced through greater use of differentiation strategies and the extension of the teaching of grammar in context.
- All teachers used Spanish very effectively as the main language of communication in the classroom.
- Subject provision and whole school support for Spanish was very good.
- Subject planning requires development, as currently the subject plan is text-book led and there is no written curricular plan for TY.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- All teachers should differentiate classroom activities and teach grammar within a communicative context.
- The Spanish department should develop a subject plan that is an active document, designed to be used by teachers to reflect on and improve teaching and learning in the classroom.
- The TY Spanish plan should be revisited and should include curricular plans for each module.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good with differentiation and the teaching of grammar in context identified for further development.
- All teachers used Spanish very effectively as the main language of communication in the classroom. Students were given opportunities to talk to each other in Spanish in most lessons.

- Teachers used a wide range of resources and methodologies that, in most instances, were appropriate to the learning intentions of the lessons. Teachers included activities designed to provide different levels of challenge in lessons. However, these activities did not always cater for the range of abilities in the lesson. As a result, certain activities were too challenging for some students while other activities did not provide enough challenge. This resulted in some students finishing early in some activities, while in other activities some students were unable to fully participate as the task was too difficult for them. Teachers should plan for differentiation of activities in mixed ability classes and scaffold or extend the student learning in each activity as appropriate.
- Teachers' use of assessment for learning strategies in lessons varied. All teachers shared the learning intentions of the lesson with students. In one lesson, whole-class answers to questions predominated and this resulted in the same students answering while many students did not participate. Effective use of questioning was observed in other instances, where the teacher directed questioning to assess student understanding. This good practice should be extended.
- Grammar was taught very effectively in context in one lesson. Another, less successful lesson had a grammar topic as the main learning intention of the lesson where lists of verbs and exercises were practised out of context. All teachers should design lessons where grammar is integrated within a communicative learning context to enable students to understand and practise situations in which the grammar is used.
- Teachers used information and communication technology effectively in lessons to enhance the student learning experience and to contribute to learning.
- New vocabulary was introduced effectively in one lesson as part of a learning activity where students were given the opportunity to use the newly acquired vocabulary. This good practice should be extended.
- Students were motivated to learn in all the lessons observed and had a very positive approach to participation in class activities.
- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful and affirming at all times.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Subject provision and whole school support for Spanish was very good.
- Senior management is very supportive of languages in the school and encourages creative ideas to motivate students in their language learning.
- The weekly Spanish Club and yearly Spanish week provide opportunities for students to practise speaking Spanish. Students also have the opportunity to participate in a language exchange with a school in Spain.
- Spanish teachers have their own classrooms. They have created cultural displays and displays of student work which contribute to a very positive learning environment. Language classrooms are located in the same area of the school. Teachers reported that this was conducive to further enhancing teacher collaboration.
- The school library has a Spanish section which offers a selection of Spanish books and DVDs which teachers and students avail of to enhance teaching and learning.
- Students are formally assessed through Christmas and summer examinations. In some year groups, oral skills are examined. This good practice should be adopted for all year groups.

- The principal actively encourages and supports teachers to engage in continuing professional development. The school participates in the Droichead programme and has initiated a peer-observation project to enhance teaching and learning in the school.
- The school is not compliant with time in school (circular M29/95) as TY are currently not offered 167 days of instruction. This should be addressed.

### **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The Spanish department works collaboratively. Department meetings are held regularly and minutes are maintained. The results from certificate examinations are analysed. Reflections on these analyses should be recorded in the minutes and should be used to inform future planning.
- Subject planning requires development, as currently the subject plan is text-book led. The Spanish department should develop a subject plan that is an active document, designed to be used by teachers to reflect on and improve teaching and learning in the classroom.
- The TY Spanish plan needs particular attention. There is currently only a brief outline for TY and no written curricular plan. A portion of class time is driven by a Leaving Certificate textbook; this should be avoided. The department should develop a curricular plan for each TY module to enable students to experience different aspects of the language and cultures of Spanish-speaking countries.
- Individual planning for the lessons observed was good overall.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. 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.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management is delighted that Spanish was used very effectively as the main language of communication in class and that teachers also displayed a wide range of resources and methodologies. While we agree that grammar is best taught in context, we would like it noted that the particular lesson referred to was part of a revision programme for the impending summer exams. The inspection took place on the 18<sup>th</sup> May 2017 when only a small number of classes remained before summer house exams began.

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

The school has addressed the 'time in school issue' relating to TY while still retaining some flexibility to accommodate a complex and vibrant programme.

Loreto College Foxrock is a mixed ability school where all option subjects are taught in a mixed ability setting. Ongoing CPD for staff this year is planned around the new junior cycle to include active teaching and learning methods and a range of formative assessment techniques. All of this encompasses a differentiated approach to teaching and learning.

The school will continue to support the provision of modern languages in the school and makes an ongoing commitment to support staff CPD in this area.

## 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 the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;