

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

**Subject Inspection in Spanish**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Loreto College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	53 St Stephens Green Dublin 2
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60820E

**Date of Inspection: 14-03-2018**



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An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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. 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.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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.

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

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	12 and 14 March
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

### School context

Loreto College, St. Stephen's Green is a fee-charging secondary school under the trusteeship of the Loreto Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 576 girls and offers the following programmes: Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in most of the lessons observed, with elements of exemplary practice noted.
- Teacher-use of the target language was highly effective in all lessons; in some lessons, students were given many opportunities to communicate together using Spanish but there was scope to increase these opportunities in other lessons.
- Overall, learner experiences and outcomes were very positive.
- Subject provision and whole school support is very good in the school.
- Overall, teachers' individual and collaborative planning was very good; however, in some instances there was scope to further develop individual planning.
- Collaboration within the Modern Foreign Languages department is highly effective and includes commendable practices such as the regular discussion of teaching and learning and the identifying of departmental targets for improvement.

#### Recommendations

- To increase student confidence and competence in speaking the target language, the highly effective practice observed, where teachers created activities that required students to speak to each other in Spanish, should be extended to all lessons.
- To disseminate the highly effective individual lesson planning observed in some lessons, teachers should share planning strategies that focus on developing the learning intentions.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good, with elements of exemplary practice noted; in some instances, there was scope for more active student engagement in learning.
- Teacher use of Spanish as the main language of communication was very good in all lessons observed. Student target language use varied. In some lessons, some students reported that they felt more comfortable writing Spanish before attempting to speak it. In other lessons, students used the target language with the teacher and among themselves when carrying out tasks. In these highly effective lessons, student confidence and competence in their use of the oral language was high. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Highly effective questioning strategies were observed, where teacher-directed questioning was used to assess prior learning at the outset of lessons and to evaluate learning as the lesson progressed. In some instances, there was overuse of teacher questioning to individual students, while the other students listened passively. Teachers should think of the learner experience in their planning and aim to engage all learners actively.
- Learners demonstrated very good subject knowledge in their class contributions and in their interactions with the inspector. Students consistently perform very well in certificate examinations. Students were motivated to learn in all lessons observed. Student motivation and engagement was highest when they were actively engaged in using Spanish for a communicative purpose. An example of this was an activity where students had to prepare for a shopping trip and then buy goods in an acted out role-play scenario.
- In all lessons, students demonstrated that they were able to work both independently and collaboratively in a very purposeful and productive manner. Learners were willing to risk incorrect answers. Teachers availed of mistakes to turn them into learning opportunities in a sensitive manner that contributed positively to the learning environment.
- There were many instances where digital technologies were used creatively by students, for example in the creation of e-portfolios or creating interactive revision quizzes that they shared with their peers. Homework tasks included students making audio recordings of themselves speaking Spanish. The school's e-learning platform is used to upload work for students to access from home and was reported to be particularly useful for TY students who may have missed lessons due to co-curricular activities.
- Highly effective teaching of grammar in context was observed, with activities provided for students to practise new learning in a real-life setting. This led to students having a very good understanding of the grammatical concept being studied. At other times, grammar was taught without examples of how a particular structure might be used. Grammar should always be taught in context to deepen learner understanding and improve learner outcomes.
- The use of assessment to support learning was observed to varying degrees in all lessons. All teachers shared learning intentions of the lesson with students. In the more effective lessons, these were revisited during the lesson and students reviewed their learning at the end of the lesson. This highly effective practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Teachers regularly correct student work and formative comments guiding students on how to improve their learning were noted in many copybooks. This very good practice should be continued and extended.

- The Modern Foreign Languages department organises many co-curricular and extra-curricular language activities for students to extend their learning. School teams are regular participants in the Spanish Debating competition and Spanish Quiz organised by the Association of Teachers of Spanish.

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

- Subject provision and whole school support is very good in the school. Students have the opportunity to study Spanish alongside German, French and Latin.
- The principal and deputy principal have developed a culture of learning in the school. They ensure that continuing professional development (CPD) is adapted to the identified needs of the school. All teachers are members of the Association of Teachers of Spanish and regular attendees at various CPD events. Teachers are facilitated to act as oral examiners and some teachers have also acted as examiners for certificate examinations. The learning gained from acting as examiners has subsequently been shared with other members of the department.
- The principal empowers teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, through encouraging the instructional leadership model. The principal meets with each teacher individually once a year and encourages teachers to reflectively review their work.
- Parents are valued members of the learning community. Communication with parents is via school reports three times a year following in-house examinations and parent-teacher meetings.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Overall, teachers' individual and collaborative practice in the department is highly effective; however, in some instances, there was scope to further develop individual planning.
- Individual planning for the lessons observed varied. Highly effective planning was in evidence in the majority of lessons, where teachers prepared resources and activities in advance that were tailored to match the specific learning intentions of the lesson. These planning strategies should be shared and implemented across the department.
- Collaborative planning is highly developed within Spanish. Curriculum plans are shared digitally and include links to resources and related websites. Most plans are led by learning outcomes and supported by many resources. A few plans are text-book driven and these should be reviewed. Junior Cycle professional time is being used effectively to facilitate collaborative planning and professional discussion of teaching and learning.
- Spanish teachers meet regularly as a group and also as part of the larger Modern Foreign Languages' department. It is commendable that discussion of teaching and learning is a regular feature at these meetings. Teachers review certificate examination results and compare them with national norms. It is suggested that this good practice be extended by comparing results attained in Spanish with students' examination performance across subjects and with their performance in standardised tests.
- As part of the school self-evaluation process, teachers have identified strengths and identified areas for improvement at subject department level. This is commendable. It is welcomed that the department recognised the need to increase target language use among students.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers 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 pleased to accept the findings of the inspection report.

**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 teachers of Spanish will continue to share planning strategies with particular focus on developing learning intentions. The Spanish department are committed to collaboration and sharing of resources and planning and teaching strategies. The teachers are also committed to ensuring that students grow in confidence and competence by encouraging them to use the target language while speaking to each other in the course of the lesson.



## 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 of 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;