

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Spanish

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Vevay Rd Bray Co Wicklow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61820J

Date of Inspection: 06-03-2019



**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.

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.

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

Dates of inspection	5 and 6 March 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers

School context

Loreto Secondary School is an all-girls voluntary secondary school in Bray with a current enrolment of 761 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The study of a language is compulsory in Junior Cycle.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was good, with examples of very good practice.
- A very positive, co-operative and affirming learning environment prevailed in all of the lessons observed, with respectful interactions that were conducive to wellbeing.
- All teachers used Spanish as the main language of communication in lessons; in some lessons, there was very good student-to-student use of the target language.
- Language skills were well integrated in the lessons observed; however, there was scope to improve student written production.
- The quality of subject provision and whole school support is very good.
- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation was satisfactory, with very good informal collaborative practices.

Recommendations

- The very good practice observed in some lessons, where students were regularly provided with opportunities to communicate with each other in Spanish, should be spread to all lessons.
- Teachers should increase opportunities for students in all years to create independent writing in Spanish, which should then be corrected by teachers with annotated guidance for improvement.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, teaching and learning was good with examples of very good practice.
- A very positive atmosphere prevailed in all of the lessons observed. Interactions among students and between students and teachers were very respectful, and conducive to well-being. A co-operative and affirming learning environment was evident at all times and students were provided with many opportunities to work together co-operatively.
- Spanish was the main language of communication in all lessons. All teachers used the target language in lessons and students used Spanish to converse with teachers. In some lessons, students used Spanish to complete lesson tasks and to communicate with each other and there was a very good balance between teacher and student voice. In these lessons students were confident and competent when speaking in the target language. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- In most lessons, students demonstrated good knowledge of Spanish. In some lessons, certain students struggled with aspects of Spanish grammar. There was evidence in these lessons that grammar was often taught out of context. Teachers should teach grammar in context and provide students with opportunities to practise newly acquired grammatical skills within a communicative context.
- Students were actively engaged in all lessons but, in some instances, the task proved too challenging for some students or did not sufficiently extend the learning of others. There was some evidence of differentiation in lessons, for example through grouping of students, teacher-directed questioning and teachers offering support to students. In one lesson, learning was scaffolded through the sequencing of progressively more challenging activities. This good practice should be extended to all learning activities to ensure that all activities are accessible to and sufficiently challenging for all students.
- Teachers created an inclusive, orderly, student-centred learning environment based on mutual respect, affirmation and trust. They had high expectations of students' work and behaviour and communicated these expectations effectively to students. Teachers' knowledge, enthusiasm and love of Spanish created a learning environment where students were self-motivated to engage in, extend and enjoy their learning.
- All teachers shared lesson content with students. It is recommended that teachers progress this good practice by sharing intended learning with students so that they can assess their own learning through self-assessment and peer assessment.
- A range of formative assessment strategies were observed in lessons, including teacher-directed questioning, and the use of a variety of digital technologies for assessment of learning. Digital technology was also used effectively to consolidate learning and increase student engagement.
- Language skills were well integrated in the lessons observed. A review of student copybooks revealed that, in some instances there was scope to increase student written production. Teachers should increase opportunities for students to create independent writing in all years. This work should be corrected by teachers and constructive feedback should be given to students on how to improve their writing.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole school support is very good.
- The principal and other leaders in the school promote a learning culture in the school. They foster students' holistic development by providing a broad range of co-curricular and

extracurricular learning opportunities, including a European Day of Languages, Diversity week and a TY Gaisce trip to walk the Camino de Santiago.

- In light of *Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026*, it is welcomed that there is very good provision for languages in the school. Three modern languages are offered at junior cycle and students may choose to study two up to Leaving Certificate. All students study Chinese in TY and this language is offered after school to students in other years.
- Timetabling for languages is in line with guidelines and there is very good deployment of teachers.
- The principal empowers teachers to take on leadership roles and to lead learning, through the effective use of distributed leadership models. The subject co-ordinator role is regularly rotated, and MFL teachers are involved in the school's teaching and learning and digital learning committees.
- Senior management makes deliberate and informed efforts to meet the curriculum needs of students. Reflective practice is encouraged throughout the school, as is evidenced in the evaluation of taster subjects and the trialling of hour-long lessons.
- Those in leadership and management roles keep abreast of thinking, developments and changes in the broader educational environment and use this information positively for the benefit of the school. Whole-school assessment practices are being reviewed to incorporate changes to assessment at Junior Cycle and 'Feedback for Learning' weeks have recently been introduced.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation is satisfactory.
- Teachers recognise and affirm continuing professional development and collaboration as a means to improve student learning and to enhance their own professional development. They have been active in professional networks, and members of the department act as examiners for the State Examinations Commission and share their expertise. They regularly engage in informal collaborative practice, sharing resources and methodological approaches. Teachers have their own individual banks of resources and have recently started to share these digitally.
- The Spanish department meets regularly but currently minutes are not taken at meetings. Minutes should be taken at all meetings, noting decisions taken and identifying those who agree to take action. It is welcomed that MFL meetings commenced and that the school intends to form an MFL department. Minutes of MFL meetings reflect that they are mainly administrative in nature. In light of demands of the new MFL specification at Junior Cycle, it is suggested that teaching and learning be included on the agenda for MFL meetings.
- A learning outcomes approach to Junior Cycle planning has commenced. This now needs to be further developed. Junior Cycle learning outcomes should reflect the MFL specification and should integrate the three MFL strands of communicative competence, language awareness and socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness. Grammar, syntax and pronunciation should be embedded so these aspects of language learning are taught in a communicative context.
- Currently, the TY plan consists of a brief outline of the modules taught. Formal assessment incorporates the *Diploma de Español como Lengua Extranjera*, offering students an alternative approach to language learning and assessment to that offered at Junior and Senior Cycle. Fifth and sixth year plans are textbook-driven and consist of very brief outlines of the material to be taught. Curricular plans should reflect the high quality of teaching and

learning observed in lessons. They should be regularly updated active documents, designed to support improvement in teaching, learning and assessment.

- All lessons observed were well prepared with resources prepared in advance that were tailored to the learning intentions of the lesson. Individual planning of the lessons observed ranged from adequate to highly effective. In most instances, there was good progression between lesson tasks designed to progressively consolidate learning, and this good practice should be extended.

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 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
Very Good	Very good 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 outstanding 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
Good	Good 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
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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
Fair	Fair 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
Weak	Weak 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;