

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

Subject Inspection in Spanish

REPORT

School name	Rockwell College
School address	Cashel Co Tipperary
Roll number	65300D

Date of Inspection: 07-03-2017



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

Date of inspection	07-03-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Rockwell College is a fee-charging, co-educational, boarding and day school under the patronage of the Spiritan Education Trust. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. There is a current enrolment of 480 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- While there were some strengths in the teaching and learning observed, there were also evident weaknesses that had a negative effect on student learning.
- The target language was used by the teacher throughout the lessons observed but there was significant scope to develop student use of the target language.
- The use of differentiation strategies would have enhanced student learning.
- Student work was corrected regularly but formative comments were not observed.
- Overall, subject provision is good.
- Planning and preparation in Spanish was unsatisfactory.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Active student engagement in lessons should be prioritised and opportunities should be provided for students to talk together using Spanish.
- Differentiation strategies should be explored and implemented in lessons to adequately support and challenge students.
- A whole-school approach to assessment should be developed to include the provision of written guidance to students on how to improve their work.
- Individual and subject planning in Spanish need to be addressed as a matter of urgency.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, teaching and learning in the lessons observed was fair. While there were strengths in the teaching and learning, there were also evident weaknesses that had a negative effect on student learning. The school should address these deficiencies without delay in order to improve learner outcomes and experiences.

- Spanish was used as the main language of communication during lessons. This is good practice as it exposes students to the target language. While some individual students were given the opportunity to answer questions in Spanish, others did not speak any Spanish during lessons. Opportunities should be provided for all students to talk together in Spanish.
- Lessons were very teacher-led. Most students were passive throughout lessons. No opportunities were provided for students to work together in pairs or in groups. In one lesson, where the stated learning intention was to practice for the oral examination, almost half of the learners were not given an opportunity to participate in the lesson. This needs to be addressed as a matter of urgency. All lessons should be planned around active learning.
- At the start of each lesson, students were provided with an outline of what would be covered during that lesson. However, these learning intentions were broad and unfocused. Learning intentions should state what students will be able to do by the end of the lesson or series of lessons. This will need to be addressed in future planning.
- There was a lack of focus on the learner in some of the teaching methodologies used. In some instances, students who were native speakers dominated class discussions with the teacher and less able learners were not given an opportunity to take part. When planning an activity, teachers should consider how it can be developed to enhance student learning.
- There was a mix of abilities in all classes. However, there was little evidence of planning for differentiation in learning activities. The school should consider providing continuous professional development (CPD) on differentiation at a whole-school level. The focus of such CPD should be on how differentiation strategies might be incorporated into lessons to adequately support or challenge students, as appropriate.
- The Spanish room is an inviting space, with examples of student work displayed as well as cultural displays and reference material.
- Student behaviour was excellent at all times.
- A review of copybooks revealed evidence of student work. However, there were very few examples of independent student writing. Students should be given regular opportunities to write independently in Spanish in a level-appropriate manner. At senior cycle, students should be given regular opportunities to give their written opinions on a diverse range of topics.
- Teacher correction of student work was evident; however, no guidance was provided in the written corrections. Corrected work should include comments to guide students on how to improve their work.
- Students are tested regularly in class. This normally takes the form of vocabulary tests. The department should devise a range of assessments in all four language skills and use these formatively to advise students on how to improve their learning.
- There was an over emphasis on teacher oral instruction during lessons. As a result, many students had incorrect spellings in their copybooks. New vocabulary should be presented in written format as well as orally to improve student literacy.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, subject provision was good.
- The principal and deputy ensure that the timetable allocation in Spanish is in line with guidelines.
- Students have a short sampling programme of option subjects in first year and this helps inform student subject choice.

- There is currently no whole-school approach to assessment. Evidence gathered during the evaluation indicated that such an approach, with an emphasis on providing written guidance for student improvement, would be of benefit to learners.
- The principal and deputy principal are supportive of teacher CPD and encourage participation in professional networks.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning and preparation in Spanish was unsatisfactory.
- The subject plan needs to be significantly developed. Currently, year plans are limited to a very brief outline of topics to be covered.
- A modern languages department has been established. This is good practice as it enables teachers of different languages to collaborate. Teachers meet regularly and minutes are maintained. Currently, meetings are mainly administrative in nature. An item of teaching and learning should be included on each agenda to encourage the sharing of good practice.
- Teacher engagement in CPD in Spanish is commendable.
- Individual lesson planning was poor and had a significant negative impact on student experience and student outcomes. This needs to be addressed without delay.
- A good range of classroom resources were available; however, there was scope for these to be used further to enhance student learning.
- Record keeping was good at departmental level. There was good communication with parents via reports following Christmas and Easter examinations, parent-teacher meetings and the school journal. Parents also receive regular reports on their child's progress.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher 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.

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
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;

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 thanks the Inspectorate for its report and welcomes the observation of established good practices in subject provision, communication with parents and student behaviour.

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

Innovations and improved practice in relation to subject planning and differentiation strategies will be implemented within the subject department with immediate effect. CPD in those areas will be supported by the Board going forward and the Board is confident that positive developments in the teaching and learning experience of pupils in the subject will be evident.