

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

Subject Inspection in Spanish

REPORT

School name	St Mac Dara's Community College
School address	Wellington Lane Templeogue Dublin 6W
Roll number	70260V

Date of Inspection: 27-02-2017



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	27-02-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mac Dara's Community College is a co-educational school under the Dublin and Dun Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB) with a current enrolment of 865 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Spanish is an optional subject at junior and senior cycle. Spanish is also offered in the optional TY programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from very good in the majority of lessons to satisfactory.
- All teachers used Spanish as the main language of instruction and there was very good teacher use of the target language in most of the lessons observed.
- Student learning would have been enhanced in most lessons through increased use of differentiation strategies, both to support less able students and to extend the more able.
- A review of student work revealed a variation in correction practices by teachers and this is an area for improvement.
- Overall, subject provision and whole-school support was good.
- Overall, planning and preparation in the department was good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should further develop and implement differentiation strategies in lessons.
- A whole-school approach to assessment should be developed; this should include the use of written formative comment marking to guide student learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning ranged from very good in the majority of lessons to satisfactory.
- All teachers used Spanish as the main language of instruction. There was very good teacher use of the target language in most of the lessons observed. In these lessons, students

understood lesson content and instructions for activities. In a minority of instances, students struggled to understand and the teacher resorted to translating into English. Teachers should share strategies for maintaining target language use in the classroom and implement these consistently across lessons.

- Student interactions with the inspector through Spanish demonstrated varying degrees of level-appropriate competence and confidence in speaking the target language. The more confident Spanish speakers were in the lessons where there was regular student use of Spanish. Opportunities for students to use the target language varied across the lessons observed. Best practice was observed where activities were designed which necessitated students speaking Spanish with each other. This should be extended across all lessons, as appropriate.
- In all lessons, students were provided with opportunities to work productively together.
- Good use of information and communications technology was observed in all lessons. Presentations were well-prepared in advance and online resources were used creatively to enhance student engagement. A shared learning platform was used to share work with students in some instances.
- All classes are mixed ability at junior cycle. At senior cycle there is also a range of abilities in each class. There was limited evidence of differentiation in the lessons observed. Student learning would have been enhanced in most lessons through increased use of differentiation strategies, both to support less able students and to extend the more able. Teachers should investigate and implement differentiation strategies while maintaining target language use in the classroom.
- A good range of assessment for learning techniques was observed in lessons such as the sharing and reviewing of learning outcomes and the use of self-assessment of learning.
- A review of student work revealed a variation in correction practices by teachers. In most lessons, student work was corrected regularly by the teacher. In a minority of instances, there was very limited teacher correction. In a few instances, teachers included comments on how students could improve their work. Management and teachers should adopt a whole-school approach to assessment, including teacher use of formative comment marking to guide student improvement.
- Numeracy, literacy and homework were chosen as targets for school self-evaluation (SSE) in recent years. Homework was assigned regularly and recorded in student journals. There is some reference to the school's literacy strategy in the Spanish planning documentation; however, the implementation of the school's SSE literacy and numeracy strategies in lessons could be improved.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, subject provision and whole-school support was good.
- Languages are obligatory at junior cycle and optional in senior cycle. The principal and deputy principal ensure that the timetable allocation for Spanish is in line with curricular guidelines.
- Spanish is one of four modern languages taught in the school. Currently, students may only study one language. Management should consider enabling interested students to study more than one modern language.
- A year-long subject-sampling programme is offered in first year, but languages are not included in this programme. Management should consider ways of including languages in the sampling programme to help inform students' curricular choices.

- The principal supports the provision of extra-curricular activities which enhance student engagement with languages, such as the lunch-time languages' club, debating and cinema trips.
- Assessment is by in-class tests at end of topics, plus Christmas and summer in-house examinations. There is currently no whole-school assessment policy. Evidence gathered over the course of the evaluation suggests that the development of such a policy would enhance teacher practice, thereby contributing to the improvement of student learning.
- There is currently no base room for Spanish in the school. Management should consider providing a Spanish base room to enable teachers to create a print-rich environment in the target language which would greatly contribute to the learner experience of Spanish.
- The Spanish teachers are all suitably qualified. The principal and deputy support teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) and participation in professional networks.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation in the department was good.
- There are regular departmental meetings and minutes are maintained. Teachers carry out an analysis of certificate examination results in Spanish. The analysis of junior certificate results has been used to inform planning for improvement at junior cycle. This is very good practice and should be extended to senior cycle.
- Detailed curricular plans have been developed for most year-groups. In some instances, these plans are driven by learning outcomes. This is good practice and should be extended to all plans, as currently, some curricular plans are textbook driven. The current curricular plan for TY comprises a brief outline of the Spanish modules offered. This should be further developed in line with the good practice described above.
- Spanish teachers have actively engaged with CPD. Some have shared their expertise, both at school level and through active involvement with the Association of Teachers of Spanish. This is commendable.
- Individual planning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good. All teachers had sourced a range of high quality resources.
- Communication with parents is via parent-teacher meetings, reports and via the school journal.

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. 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 welcomes the main findings of the report and will use its recommendations to guide the future development of Spanish in the school.

The Board of Management appreciates the hard work and enthusiasm of the members of the Spanish Department in their promotion of the teaching and learning of Spanish in the school. It welcomes that the report acknowledges the following: the very good use of the target language in the lessons, the good range of assessment for learning techniques being used, the use of junior certificate results to inform planning for improvement and that the teachers engage actively in CPD which is supported by the management of the school.

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 Board of Management welcome the recommendations of the report and notes the following which will be addressed: the development of a whole school assessment policy, the analysis of all results to inform planning and improvement and the provision of a Spanish base room.

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;