An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Spanish

REPORT

School name	Coláiste Dún Iascaigh
School address	Cashel Road Cahir Co Tipperary
Roll number	76063D

Date of Inspection: 23-03-2017

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	23-03-2017
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and teachers • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Coláiste Dún Iascaigh is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 634 students, under the auspices of Tipperary Education and Training Board (ETB). The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme as well as an optional Transition Year (TY).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of teaching and learning in the Spanish lessons observed was good overall, with elements of exemplary practice.
- Teacher use of the target language in the lessons observed was exemplary; however, student competence and confidence in the use of the target language varied.
- Teacher use of differentiation strategies varied in the lessons observed.
- Teacher correction of student work and the provision of constructive developmental feedback varied in the student work reviewed.
- Subject provision and whole school support in the school were very good.
- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation in Spanish was very good.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- All teachers should ensure that some activities in lessons are designed to get students speaking to each other in Spanish at a level appropriate to their learning needs.
- All teachers should use differentiation strategies in lessons and homework tasks to ensure that students are challenged by the learning activities and experience success as learners.
- All teachers should regularly provide written constructive developmental feedback on students' work to provide students with clear strategies for improvement.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **TEACHING AND LEARNING**
   - The quality of teaching and learning in the Spanish lessons observed was good overall, with elements of exemplary practice.
   - Teacher use of Spanish as the main language of instruction was exemplary. Teachers adopted very effective strategies, including mime, to maintain target language use in the classroom. Student confidence and competence in speaking Spanish varied. Students were most confident in a lesson which included differentiated paired student speaking activities. All teachers should ensure that some activities in lessons are designed to get students speaking to each other in Spanish at a level appropriate to their learning needs.
   - Teachers designed learning activities appropriate to the learning intentions of the lessons observed and sourced support material such as handouts, video-clips and presentations. In one lesson, the teacher had sourced real products from a chemist to support a learning activity. Teachers devised a range of stimulating learning activities to enhance student engagement. Innovative approaches to encourage students' productive participation included the use of sticky notes on models to revise body-parts, a speed-dating activity with fictitious characters to practice oral Spanish, and the use of games to reinforce vocabulary and to practise verbs.
   - Information and communications technology (ICT) was used very effectively to support learning in the majority of lessons. Teachers designed presentations to support the learning of new vocabulary with images and phrases; a countdown clock was very effective in enhancing student engagement in one activity. In one lesson, a student used ICT very effectively to give a comprehensive presentation in Spanish of his project work.
   - All classes are mixed-ability in the school. Class activities and homework tasks were meaningfully differentiated in one lesson to meet the varying needs and abilities of students. In other lessons, a lack of appropriate differentiation in some of the tasks resulted in more advanced students not being suitably challenged. All teachers should use differentiation strategies in lessons and homework tasks to ensure that students are challenged by the learning activities and experience success as learners.
   - At all times during the lessons observed, interactions between students and teachers and among students themselves were very respectful. Teachers regularly affirmed students and this contributed to a positive learning environment.
   - In the majority of lessons, teachers skilfully managed their own input to optimise productive student participation and response. In some instances, the teacher's voice predominated leading to less active student engagement in the activity. All teachers should plan each activity to optimise student participation.
   - There was regular teacher correction of student work in in most of the copybooks reviewed. In a few instances, in addition to identifying errors, the teacher included written guidance on how students could improve their work. This is very good practice. All teachers should regularly provide written constructive developmental feedback on students' work to provide students with clear strategies for improvement.
   - Explicit attention to literacy varied in the lessons observed. Very good practice was observed where the teacher corrected oral literacy unobtrusively and availed of opportunities to introduce grammar in context. At other times, opportunities to improve literacy were not availed of. In one lesson, numeracy was incorporated very successfully into a learning activity. All teachers should endeavour to incorporate literacy and numeracy strategies into lessons.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, subject provision and whole school support in the school were very good.
- Students have very good access to languages in the school. They may study two languages in junior cycle and have the option of studying up to three languages in senior cycle, if they have studied a third language outside of school.
- Curricular provision is in line with guidelines and teachers are deployed effectively.
- There is very good support for extra-curricular activities which include a Spanish film trip for every year group.
- The provision of a Spanish base-room has enhanced the student learning environment. Teachers have created a print-rich environment which includes posters with prompts for maintaining target language use and samples of student work. In one instance however, the room allocated was not ideal for a language lesson. A temporary room partition impeded students' ability to hear the listening comprehension and made it more difficult for students to understand the teacher.
- Whole-school assessment is through mid-year and end-of-year in-school examinations. All four language skills are assessed which is good practice.
- There is very good support for teacher continuous professional development. A school-wide ICT initiative for teachers has led to increased collaboration among teachers and peer coaching has been established to increase teacher confidence and competence in using ICT.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation in Spanish was very good.
- The inclusion of the Spanish department within a Modern Languages department is effective as teacher feedback indicated that this has encouraged collaborative practice across languages.
- Regular language meetings were held and minutes were maintained until the current academic year. It was reported that no Modern Language meetings had been held this year due to industrial action.
- Certificate examination results are analysed by the department. This analysis should be used to inform planning. In particular, strategies should be put in place to increase the uptake of higher level Spanish at Junior and Leaving Certificate level.
- Subject department planning for Spanish was very good. Plans for all years were time-bound and outcome-led. They outlined details of language exponents, methodologies and resources used.
- Individual planning for lessons was effective overall, although there was scope to plan for increased student target language use in some lessons.
- Communication with parents is via reports, parent-teacher meetings and student journals.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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 *very good* 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;