

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

**Subject Inspection of Spanish**  
**REPORT**

**Marian College**  
**Ballsbridge, Dublin 4**  
**Roll number: 60500J**

**Date of inspection: 12 January 2016**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F**  
**O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N**  
**A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN SPANISH**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	11 and 12 January 2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- Spanish was used by most teachers as the main language of instruction.
- There was some scope for development regarding student use of the target language.
- A range of student abilities was observed in lessons and these were well catered for in a small number of lessons.
- Classroom management was very good in all lessons observed, which contributed to a very positive the learning environment.
- There is a very good collegial, collaborative and supportive atmosphere in the department.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- All teachers should use Spanish as the main language of instruction in lessons.
- All teachers should ensure that they plan for student communicative oral tasks in Spanish.
- All teachers should use differentiation strategies, as appropriate, to support the optimisation of student access to the curriculum.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Marian College is a voluntary secondary school for boys serving an urban catchment area in Dublin, with a current enrolment of 425 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Schools (DEIS) action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good. There were elements of very good practice in a minority of lessons.
- Teacher use of Spanish varied in the lessons observed. Most, but not all teachers, used Spanish as the main language of instruction. Some very good strategies for target language use were observed. For example, mime was used to great effect by one teacher to support the target language. The department should consider sharing such strategies for promoting target language use in the classroom. All teachers should ensure that they use Spanish as the main language of instruction.
- In some lessons, students were very comfortable with the target language, understanding and using it themselves in an appropriate manner. In other lessons observed, however, there was scope for development for increased use of the target language by students. Where good student use of the target language was observed, activities had been planned that necessitated students interacting with each other in Spanish. This very good practice of planning for communicative oral tasks in Spanish should be adopted by all teachers.
- Various methodologies which supported learning were observed. Teachers fully exploited appropriately chosen handouts to focus attention and support learning. There was good use of information and communications technology (ICT) in some lessons. Examples included a quiz which was used to great effect to encourage student engagement and participation, matching-up activities that consolidated vocabulary acquisition and the exploitation of aural transcripts that supported feedback.
- The teaching of grammar in context was very effective in some lessons and this is very good practice.
- A range of student abilities was observed in lessons. In a small number of lessons, this range was catered for through the use of differentiated questioning techniques. This good practice should be extended to all lessons and further developed to include differentiation of tasks, resources and homework, in order to support the optimisation of student access to the curriculum.
- Classroom management was very good in all the lessons observed. There was a very positive atmosphere in all lessons which contributed to the learning environment. Consideration should be given to classroom layout. Placing tables in groups rather than single file would be more conducive to collaborative learning.
- A review of copybooks revealed that homework was regularly set and corrected in class, with monitoring by teachers. On occasion, student written production was corrected with the addition of comments to guide student improvement; this is very good practice and it should be implemented by all teachers.

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

- There is good provision for Spanish in the school and uptake of the language has been increasing in recent years. Most teachers have their own classrooms where they have displayed language-specific materials to aid student learning.
- All students have the opportunity to study a language. They choose between Spanish and French before entering the school and may continue with their chosen language until Leaving Certificate.
- There is good curricular provision for Spanish, with lessons being timetabled concurrently, which offers the department flexibility when planning.
- All school in-house examinations include an oral and aural assessment which is good practice.
- Teachers have been provided with laptops which enable them to use ICT in lessons and teachers made good use of the school's ICT facilities.
- There is very good support for staff development in the school. Members of the department have been facilitated to work as oral examiners, all teachers are members of the Association of Teachers of Spanish and some members of the department are undertaking postgraduate study.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Department planning is good. Some plans have references to learning outcomes, and this good practice should be extended to all plans. Current plans tend to follow textbook outlines. This should be reviewed by the department and the plans further developed to include theme-specific methodologies, resources and assessments.
- The TY Spanish plan has recently been reviewed and a modular approach adopted. It is suggested that the current cultural elements in each module become the module focus, and that related language and grammar elements be integrated therein.
- There is a very good collegial, and supportive atmosphere in the department. The department works collaboratively, sharing ideas and resources. It is suggested that the school consider ways in which the department could share resources and plans electronically, to further facilitate their collaborative planning.
- Department meetings are held regularly. Minutes revealed that teaching and learning issues have been discussed in some meetings and this very good practice should be extended to all meetings. It is also suggested that the current good practice of analysis by individual teachers of attainment in house and certificate examinations be extended to include analysis at departmental level. This analysis should then be used to inform future subject planning.

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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.

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