

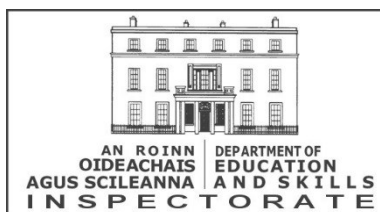
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Spanish
REPORT**

**St Joseph of Cluny
Killiney, County Dublin
Roll number: 60260P**

Date of inspection: 6 April 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	6 April 2016
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 two lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.
- The target language was used as the language of instruction by teachers at all times during the lessons observed.
- Some students had difficulties communicating in the target language.
- Literacy skills were developed very well in the lessons observed and in student copybooks.
- All classes in the school are mixed ability and some evidence of differentiation was observed during the course of the evaluation.
- Spanish is offered as an optional subject on a rotating basis with German.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The department should further develop and implement strategies for differentiation in the target language to enable all students to maximise their learning.
- Teachers should incorporate into every lesson pair or group activities which are specifically designed to give students opportunities to speak to each other in Spanish about the topic being studied.

INTRODUCTION

St. Joseph of Cluny Secondary School is a Catholic, fee-charging secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 361 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed. All lessons had a very good pace and a range of activities which contributed to learning. Students were fully engaged throughout the lessons.
- Teachers used the target language at all times. Some students used Spanish as their main language of communication in lessons, and this good practice should be further encouraged by teachers.
- Student responses and interactions with the inspector revealed that some had difficulties communicating in the target language. Teachers should incorporate into every lesson pair or group activities which are specifically designed to give students opportunities to speak to each other in Spanish about the topic being studied. There was also scope for developing students' pronunciation of the target language.
- Students were comfortable with the target language when used by the teacher but some students had difficulty understanding when addressed by the inspector. Teachers should ensure that they regularly use audio and audio-visual resources to provide exposure to other speakers and accents in the target language in order to improve student understanding.
- In one lesson, grammar was taught very effectively in context. It is recommended that this good practice be extended to all lessons. The teaching of grammar out of context was observed in another lesson and this should be avoided.
- All classes in the school are mixed ability. In one lesson, there was some evidence of differentiation when students were given the choice of using dictionaries to support them in their learning. Overall however, there was scope to further develop and implement strategies for differentiation in the target language to enable all students to maximise their learning. It is suggested that teaching the optional novel in senior cycle would serve to extend the more able students.
- There was a very good atmosphere in all the lessons observed, with lots of positive affirmation of students by the teacher. Classroom management and student behaviour were very good throughout the evaluation.
- Many assessment for learning strategies were observed during the evaluation. Learning intentions were shared with students at the outset and different approaches were used to evaluate ongoing learning during lessons. This good practice could be further extended by reviewing learning at the end of lessons. A review of copybooks revealed that student work is corrected regularly, with formative comments added to guide student improvement. This is very good practice.
- Literacy skills were developed to great effect in the lessons observed and in student copybooks. Students were adept at using grammatical terminology and at identifying different parts of speech in the target language. Teachers should consider developing numeracy within lessons to further develop this good practice.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision is good. The study of a language is compulsory in junior and senior cycle. Spanish is offered on a rotating basis with German alongside French. Subject choices are made before students enter first year. A short sampling programme in first year might be beneficial in helping students choose subjects.
- A wide range of extra-curricular events, which include participation in Spanish debating, is offered to students. These events contribute to enhancing student engagement with Spanish. Co-curricular events are regularly included in department planning.
- Teachers have their own rooms, and this has allowed for a print-rich environment with lots of student work on display which is conducive to learning.
- The implementation of the whole-school formative assessment policy was evidenced in lessons during the inspection.
- The subject is well resourced and teachers have availed of continuous professional development in Spanish.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning is very good within the department. A very good start has been made to the subject department plan. The quality of schemes of work vary across year groups, however. The better schemes of work are time-bound, theme-based plans with clearly defined learning outcomes and associated resources and methodologies. These should be further developed to include references to differentiated resources and outcomes. Some year plans follow the outline of textbooks. This should be avoided and all year plans should be developed as outlined above.
 - Self-evaluation questionnaires are given to students in all years. These are subsequently analysed by teachers and used to inform planning, and this is very good practice.
 - Currently, certificate examination results are analysed by teachers and compared to national norms. These are then discussed with the principal and used to inform future planning. It is suggested that it might also be beneficial to discuss an individual's attainment in Spanish compared to their attainment in other subjects and their sigma /CAT scores.
 - Regular Spanish department meetings are held. Occasional meetings of all modern languages teachers are also held, facilitating collaboration between languages. Discussion of elements of teaching and learning are a regular feature in meetings and this is very good practice. All minutes are appropriately maintained.
 - Individual planning for the lessons observed was very good and all lessons observed were very well prepared.
 - Communication with parents is good, via regular reports, parent-teacher meetings and the school newsletter.
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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.