

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Spanish
REPORT**

**Loreto High School Beaufort
Rathfarnham Dublin 14
Roll number: 60340N**

Date of inspection: 3 November 2015



**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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	2 and 3 November 2015
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 six class periods● Examination of students' work● Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the majority of lessons observed.
- Spanish was used as the language of instruction by teachers in all the lessons observed; however, students need to be given further opportunities to speak Spanish to each other during lessons.
- A range of methodologies, including group and pair work, was used in all lessons.
- Teachers made good use of information technology (ICT) and other resources to support students' learning.
- Whole-school support for languages in the school is very positive, with all students having access to the study of two languages.
- A good start has been made in subject planning, which now needs further development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should plan for greater opportunities for authentic oral communication in Spanish in all lessons.
- The Spanish department should further develop the Transition Year (TY) Spanish plan.
- The Spanish department should ensure that future subject planning focus on developing current schemes of work to include theme-based teaching methodologies, resources and assessments.

INTRODUCTION

Loreto High School Beaufort is a voluntary secondary school with 631 female students under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. It is a fee-paying school serving an urban catchment area. It offers the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate, a compulsory TY programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In the majority of lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- In all lessons observed the proposed lesson content was communicated to the students. It is recommended that this be expressed in terms of what the students should know or be able to do by the end of the lesson. Lesson content was reviewed at the end of most of the lessons observed with students being asked to reflect on their learning, which is good practice.
- Spanish was used as the language of instruction in all lessons; however, students need to be given further opportunities to speak Spanish to each other during lessons. Speaking activities should also be devised to enable students to put new vocabulary and expressions into practice.
- Most lessons observed incorporated a grammar element which was taught in isolation and practised by means of aural and written exercises. It is recommended that grammar be taught in context, and that lessons be planned to provide opportunities for students to manipulate grammatical concepts orally.
- Pair work or group work was observed in all lessons and students engaged well with the assigned tasks. Care should be taken to ensure that these tasks be carried out through Spanish.
- Assessment for learning techniques were used in most lessons observed. The ‘show-me’ board and ‘traffic lights’ in the student journal were used to great effect in one lesson.
- Question-and-answer sessions were used in all lessons. In many instances these consisted of teacher-directed questioning. Some students were reticent when communicating with the inspector. Planning lessons to allow students more time to ask each other questions in Spanish would help build students’ oral competence and confidence and this is recommended for all lessons.
- ICT was used in all lessons. Song, film and interactive quizzes were integrated very effectively into some lessons and further use of this good practice is recommended to enhance learning. ICT is used at times to enable students to engage with Spanish outside the classroom. Teachers have developed a blog for senior students where resources can be uploaded and students can contribute, often as a homework activity. It is suggested that this commendable practice be extended to cater for all year groups.
- Classroom management was very good in all lessons; there was a very good rapport between students and teachers, with lots of positive affirmation of students.
- Homework was assigned in all of the lessons observed and copybooks were regularly monitored by teachers. Written feedback by teachers using formative written feedback was observed in some copybooks, this good practice should be extended. It is recommended that the requirements of good writing be outlined to students to foster independent learning.

- Students are formally assessed in all four language skills during Christmas and Easter in-house examinations. This is good practice and it is suggested that consideration be given to participating in the optional Junior Certificate oral examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school provision and support for Spanish in the allocation of time, timetabling and the provision of resources.
- The study of a modern European language is obligatory. Spanish is a growing language and may be studied alongside a second language which is commended.
- An excellent print-rich environment was observed in the teacher-based classrooms, where the focus was on displays of student work, key expressions and grammar points.
- There is an ongoing commitment of both management and staff to continuing professional development, including post-graduate studies. Teachers availed of in-service training for teachers of Spanish, and members of the department have been actively involved in the Association of Teachers of Spanish.
- Members of the department have participated in peer-observation and used this reflective exercise to improve the teaching and learning of Spanish in the school.
- Students are afforded the opportunity to participate in the Spanish debating league and in the Spanish quiz which is commended. The school has also organised a trip to Spain in recent years.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Individual planning for the lessons observed was very good. The variety of resources used revealed a high level of advance preparation.
- Minutes are kept of subject department meetings which are held on a regular basis. It is recommended that these meetings include some discussion relating to teaching and learning; for example, discussion of what was learnt from peer-observation.
- A good start has been made in developing good theme-based, time-bound schemes of work for each year group outlining learning objectives and outcomes. It is recommended that these schemes be further developed to include theme-based teaching methodologies, resources, and assessments. Learning outcomes, methodologies and resources should be differentiated to cater for the different ability groups. It is suggested that the current sharing of plans would be enhanced if they were shared electronically. This would allow for hyperlinks to resources, further enhancing the collaborative practices of the department.
- The TY Spanish plan should be further developed in line with the Department's *Transition Year Programme- Guidelines for Schools*. Consideration should also be given to the introduction of a student portfolio of work into TY Spanish, consisting of a time-bound range of task-based continuous assessments.

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.