

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Italian  
REPORT**

**St Joseph's College  
Lucan, County Dublin  
Roll number: 60263V**

**Date of inspection: 24 November 2011**



**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 ITALIAN**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection:</b> 23, 24 November 2011	
<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 and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- In some of the lessons observed, the teaching was very good or excellent, while in others there was considerable scope for improvement.
- The quality of learning in the lessons observed varied from very good to fair, and student attainment in general is good or very good.
- The quality of subject planning and co-ordination is very good.
- School provision and support for Italian is very good and the subject continues to be a popular choice with students.
- A very good range of co-curricular activities supports the teaching of Italian.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In the context of the school's self-evaluation process, the Italian department is encouraged to review its own practices and outcomes in the light of this inspection report.
  - A strategy should be put in place to ensure consistent use of Italian as the language of communication and instruction in all classes.
  - The production of oral language by students should be a priority, as should the production of authentic written Italian from first year onwards.
  - The subject plan should be expanded to provide details regarding modes of assessment in each of the language skills and also of the systems in place for recording work completed in class and also individual students' progress in language acquisition.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

St Josephs' Secondary School is a post-primary school for girls, under the trusteeship of CEIST – Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust. The school serves a large suburban catchment area, and at the time of the evaluation had an enrolment of 877. The school offers the Transition Year programme (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) in addition to the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes. Italian has been on the school's curriculum since 1989, and a subject inspection in Italian was last carried out in December 2001. The school participated in the piloting of the EFLUSL (Evaluation of Foreign Languages at Upper Secondary Level) evaluation instruments during the school year 2004-05.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching varied over the four lessons observed, which included two double periods. In some, the teaching was very good or excellent, while in others there was considerable scope for improvement.
- In all lessons, rapport between teachers and students was very good, students were interested in their learning and engaged well with the activities. Teachers were affirming of the students' efforts and had created an attractive learning environment, with maps, pictures and posters on the classroom walls.
- The quality of teaching resources used in all lessons was very good. ICT was used extensively, including some very high quality teacher-produced visuals which were used effectively in one of the lessons.
- Where the teaching was very good or excellent, the target language was used as the medium of communication and instruction, students were challenged by appropriate learning outcomes, teaching was lively and interesting, and grammar was taught communicatively. Students were motivated and were active in acquiring and using new language.
- Where there was scope for improvement, the methodology tended towards grammar-translation, and English was to a large extent the language of instruction and communication. Students were not sufficiently challenged to speak Italian and the learning outcomes were either unclear or inadequate.
- Overall, there was scope for much more production of oral language by students, beyond short answers and memorised sentences. Teacher expectations are important in this regard, and the production of oral Italian by students should be a priority in all lessons. Students should be encouraged to speak about their own lives, interests and activities.
- It is recommended, as was recommended in 2001, that the use of translation to explain or to check understanding be avoided as far as possible. Building on the very good practice seen in some lessons, it is recommended that a strategy be put in place to ensure consistency in the use of Italian as the language of communication and instruction in all lessons.
- Arising from their oral work and in line with the recommendations in the Chief Examiner's reports, it is recommended that students produce simple written texts from first year onwards. This activity would develop naturally over time to include extended writing tasks of the kind required in the certificate examinations.

- Students are prepared well for the certificate examinations in Italian. The percentage of students taking higher level in the examinations is very good, especially in Junior Certificate, and attainment is generally good or very good.
- To foster students' confidence and competence in spoken Italian, it is strongly recommended that the school consider offering the optional Junior Certificate oral examination.
- It is recommended that the Italian department analyse the examination results each year, compare them with the national statistics and with the students' attainment in other subjects. They can then set appropriate targets for improved attainment. The more able students, for example, should be encouraged to aim for the higher grades.

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

- Whole-school provision for Italian is very good, as are arrangements for students' access to the subject. French is compulsory in junior cycle and first-year students choose between German and Italian as second foreign language after a taster programme in each. The uptake of Italian has been consistently good over the years.
- The teaching and learning of Italian is supported by a very good range of extra-curricular activities. Examples are an annual themed Italian Day, a lunchtime film club, an Italian quiz and a public speaking competition. The school has an exchange programme with a school in Bologna, and visits to Italy are an important part of the students' learning experience.
- In some of the lessons observed, photocopies of the Italian textbooks produced under the Post-Primary Languages Initiatives were in use. It is strongly recommended that the school acquire class sets of these textbooks, or digitised versions as they become available.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of planning and co-ordination for Italian is very good. The subject plan is detailed and the programme of work is set out clearly for each year group.
- Minutes of subject department meetings are kept. It is recommended, in the context of school self-evaluation, that the recommendations under Teaching and Learning above be discussed at department planning meetings. The EFLUSL quality indicators would be helpful in this self-evaluation process.
- The subject plan contains a section on assessment, record-keeping and reporting policy. It is recommended that the plan be expanded to provide details regarding modes of assessment in each of the language skills and also of the systems in place for recording work completed in class and individual students' progress in language acquisition.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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.