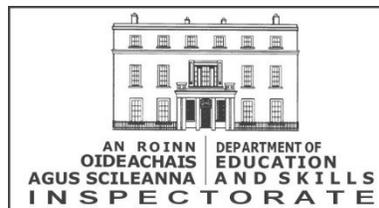


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Spanish
REPORT

CBS Synge St
Synge St, Dublin 8
Roll number: 60470D

Date of inspection: 5 April 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	5 April 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three lesson periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- While there are some strengths in the teaching and learning of Spanish, there are areas which will need to be addressed without delay as they are currently impacting negatively on student learning.
- The Spanish teacher's linguistic competence is very high; however, an excessive use of translation was observed in all lessons.
- Many examples of inclusivity were observed, where students' native cultures or languages were incorporated into lessons in a very positive manner.
- Overall, the quality of provision for languages in the school is very good.
- A good start has been made to planning in the department, which now needs to be progressed.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The Spanish department should develop and implement strategies for maintaining the target language as the main language of instruction to avoid the need for translation.
- Pair or group work which is specifically designed to give students opportunities to speak to each other in Spanish about the topic being studied should be included in all lessons.
- Students in all years should be given regular opportunities to produce independent written work in Spanish, which should then be corrected, with formative comments included on how students can improve their work.

INTRODUCTION

CBS Synge Street serves an urban catchment area, under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools' Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 240 boys and offers the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) as well as the established Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) programme. The Spanish department consists of one teacher.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- While there are some strengths in the teaching and learning of Spanish, there are areas which will need to be addressed without delay as they are currently impacting negatively on student learning.
- The Spanish teacher's linguistic competence is very high. The department should exploit this strength by developing and implementing strategies for maintaining target language use. While Spanish was used in the majority of lessons, there was an excessive use of translation observed in all lessons. It is recommended that the modern language departments in the school share strategies for promoting target language use. Further professional development could be availed of in this area.
- Almost all students had difficulty understanding and speaking Spanish in the lessons observed. There is significant scope for development with regard to student target language use in the classroom. Students should be given opportunities to repeat modelled Spanish language to make them feel more comfortable when speaking the language. Every lesson should include pair or group work specifically designed to give students opportunities to speak to each other in Spanish about the topic being studied.
- There were some effective teaching methodologies observed which supported learning, for example the use of a game to practise oral skills. Students also used worksheets from the school's Spanish website to support their learning.
- Many examples of inclusivity were observed, where students' native cultures or languages were incorporated into lessons in a very positive manner. For example, bilingual students were asked to compare certain Spanish words with the equivalent words in their own language and this contributed to raising the language awareness of students.
- There was some evidence of assessment for learning strategies. For example, the learning intentions of lessons was shared with students at the outset. To improve on this good practice, learning intentions should be reviewed during lessons and revisited at the end. In one lesson, students corrected their own work using a marking scheme, under the guidance of the teacher. While there is some merit in this practice, it should be combined with other assessment for learning techniques to maximise learning.
- A review of student copybooks revealed that while there was evidence of student work, there was little individual written work corrected. Students in all years should be given opportunities to produce independent written work in Spanish, which should then be corrected, with formative comments on how student can improve their work.
- There was a very positive relationship between the teacher and students in all the lessons observed, and student behaviour was very good.
- Students are assessed regularly in class and in school examinations, and comprehensive records are kept of these assessments. In-class assessments should be varied to include all

four language skills. Assessments should include formative as well as summative assessments of skills.

- The development of literacy skills which contributed to learning was observed in lessons. For example, in one lesson, students' attention was drawn to similarities between Spanish and other languages. Another lesson developed students' literacy skills in elements of examination language.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, the quality of provision for languages in the school is very good. Students have the choice of studying one of three languages. The study of a language is compulsory in junior cycle.
- A review of student diaries revealed that the majority of students did not write down homework assigned in lessons. The Spanish department, in conjunction with other departments and senior management, should review and develop the school homework policy and adopt a whole-school approach to homework.
- Languages are taught in base classrooms in the school. The Spanish teacher should avail of this opportunity to provide a print-rich environment and display examples of student work to encourage student engagement in language learning.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A good start has been made to planning in the department. Junior cycle plans include references to topics, themes, new vocabulary and related grammar. These plans are available for students and parents to access on the school's Spanish website. This good work should now be progressed to include theme-based references to resources and methodologies used in lessons. Planning at senior cycle is not currently as advanced and should be progressed along the lines described above.
 - There is a yearly subject planning meeting and currently minutes are not maintained. It is suggested that a Modern Language department be established to facilitate collaboration between teachers. Languages meetings should include discussion of strategies and methodologies for the effective teaching and learning of languages. Appropriate minutes should be maintained.
 - Attainment in certificate examinations is currently analysed by the principal and compared to students' CAT scores. This good practice should be extended to the Spanish department and the conclusions drawn from the analysis should be used to inform future subject planning.
 - Individual record-keeping is very good in the department and parents have access to the school's Spanish website. Parents are also kept informed via regular reports and parent-teacher meetings.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board was delighted to see the following areas highlighted in the report:

- The high level of linguistic competence of our teacher.
- The inclusive atmosphere in the classroom.
- The positive relationship between the teacher and students.
- The good behaviour of our students.
- The quality of provision for languages in the school.
- The work carried out in developing the student's literacy skills.
- The progress that has been made in relation to planning in the Spanish department.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board is taking the recommendations and the findings in relation to the shortcomings in the Spanish Department seriously and has already in co-operation with the Principal and Spanish Department made some of the necessary changes.

- A Modern Language Department has been formed and met formally at the end of the last academic year and the beginning of this year. They are working on methodologies to promote the spoken language and methodologies that ensure that translation is not such a prominent feature. We have also contacted the PDST and requested in-school in-service for our language department.
- The Modern Language Department have also progressed work in relation to planning and are including theme based references to resources and methodologies that are appropriate for each module.
- The Spanish teacher has also placed a lot of emphasis on creating a print rich environment for the students this year.
- At a whole school level we have begun work on developing a homework policy and hope to have a draft policy before the Board later this year.

The recommendations were informative and the Board believes that their implementation will have a positive impact on the students learning.