

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Spanish
REPORT

Dominican College Muckross Park
Donnybrook, Dublin 4
Roll number: 60710U

Date of inspection: 20 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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	19 and 20 January 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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- Spanish was used as the main language of instruction in most lessons.
- A very positive atmosphere, which was conducive to learning, was observed in all lessons.
- A variety of appropriate teaching and learning methodologies was observed in lessons, but there was an over-reliance on grammar and translation in most classes.
- Teachers' approaches to the assessment of students' written work varied across lessons and this requires development and greater consistency.
- There is very good provision for Spanish within the school.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should give students opportunities to manipulate written language independently.
 - Teachers should ensure that grammar is taught in context.
 - All teachers should provide formative comments on students' written work.
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INTRODUCTION

Dominican College Muckross Park is a voluntary secondary school, under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Trust, with a current enrolment of 703 girls. The Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate are provided in the school, as well as a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good.
- Spanish was used as the main language of instruction in most lessons. This is good practice as it exposes students to the target language. Teachers should ensure that they use Spanish as the main language of instruction in all lessons.
- Students' oral use of the target language was facilitated to some extent in all lessons. To build on this good practice, teachers should avail of opportunities to further facilitate students' speaking the target language. Students should be taught phrases and structures that enable them to communicate through Spanish when carrying out group or pair activities and teachers should encourage students to conduct class activities through Spanish.
- Lesson content was outlined at the beginning of most lessons. This good practice should be extended by expressing content in terms of learning intentions and reviewing these learning intentions at the end of lessons. Such an approach would enhance the consolidation of students' learning.
- A variety of appropriate methodologies was observed in lessons. However, there was an over-reliance on grammar and translation in most classes. Students should be given opportunities to manipulate written language independently, which teachers should then correct, providing formative feedback on how students can improve their work. Grammar should be taught in context and a discovery-based approach should be considered to encourage students to actively engage in their own learning.
- Almost all students were motivated and engaged in lessons. A range of student abilities was observed in lessons and, in a small minority of lessons, a differentiated approach was taken to questioning, which is good practice. It is recommended that all teachers use differentiation strategies in their lessons to help students to fully access the curriculum. It is suggested that teachers avail of professional development in this area.
- A very positive atmosphere, which was conducive to learning, was observed in all lessons and student behaviour was impeccable throughout. Classroom management was very good. There was a very good pace in lessons and transitions between activities were well managed.
- Colourful displays of student work, which enabled students to showcase their language skills and take pride in their work, were seen in all classrooms.
- Teachers' approaches to written assessment varied across lessons. A review of copybooks revealed that students corrected their work regularly in class through the use of self-marking and peer-marking. Some correction of work by the teacher was evident, with formative comments observed in a few copybooks. It is recommended that the good practice of writing formative comments to guide student improvement be implemented by all teachers.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good provision for Spanish within the school. There is very good student access to languages, with students having the option to study two languages up to Leaving Certificate level.
- All classrooms are equipped with projectors and a computer for use in teaching and learning.
- Teachers are based in their own classrooms which has enabled them to provide a print-rich environment that supports student learning.
- The school supports the professional development of staff and members of the department have availed of opportunities to attend professional development courses.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, the quality of planning in the department was good.
- Departmental meetings are held regularly and minutes are maintained appropriately. The minutes reveal, however, that meetings focus on administration issues. It is recommended that the discussion of a teaching or learning issue be included on each agenda. Time should also be allocated for the analysis of certificate examination results at departmental level and these analyses should then be used to inform planning.
- A good start has been made to planning, but curricular planning for year groups varies in quality. The better plans included theme-based learning objectives linked to theme-specific methodologies, resources and assessments. Hyperlinks to resources were included in some plans, as were theme-specific references to literacy and numeracy, where appropriate. This very good practice should be adopted for all plans.
- Planning for resources to be used in lessons varied. In most instances, teachers used appropriately-chosen handouts to support learning, and information and communication technology (ICT) was used in a small number of lessons to support teaching. There is scope for the development of creative planning, in terms of the use of ICT to support teaching and learning.
- The department has developed an assessment plan which includes reference to some formative assessment strategies. It is recommended that the department expand the range of formative strategies that could be used to support student learning and that teachers then implement these consistently in their lessons. Professional development in this area is suggested.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal/deputy principal/subject teachers 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.

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Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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 of Management welcomes the very positive report on the teaching and learning of Spanish in the school. The report acknowledges the very positive atmosphere which is conducive to learning and the very good provision for Spanish within the school.

The Board of Management wishes to congratulate the teachers of Spanish on this very positive report. The Board of Management would like to thank the Inspector for the courteous and professional manner in which the inspection was conducted.

- The first recommendation proposing that students be given the opportunity to ‘manipulate the written language independently’ has already been integrated into the teaching and learning process as a matter of course since the verbal feedback session with the inspector.
- The second recommendation is also currently being adopted and the Subject Planning documentation will reflect this.
- The third recommendation re formative comments on students’ written work is also underway.
The management further intends to provide CPD to the whole staff on the area of Formative Assessment.