

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Spanish  
REPORT**

**St Gerard's School  
Bray, County Wicklow  
Roll number: 61811I**

**Date of inspection: 11 April 2016**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF  
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION  
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	11 April 2016
<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 three lesson periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Overall, teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some elements of very good practice in evidence.
- Some students in the lessons observed had difficulty communicating in the target language.
- The quality of teachers' assessment of student written work varied in the student copybooks reviewed.
- Subject provision for Spanish is very good.
- While planning at departmental level is at a very advanced stage, there is scope to further develop the individual planning of some lessons.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To improve students' competence and confidence in the target language, teachers should include pair or group work in lessons which is specifically designed to give students opportunities to speak to each other in Spanish about the topic being studied.
- All teachers should ensure that individual lesson planning caters for the full ability range within the classroom, by further supporting or challenging learners as appropriate.
- To help guide student improvement, the department should further develop and implement formative assessment strategies in the correction of students' written work.

## **INTRODUCTION**

St Gerard's School is a fee-charging co-educational secondary school under the trusteeship of St Gerard's Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 531 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate and the established Leaving Certificate programmes as well as a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Overall, teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good, with some elements of very good practice in evidence.
- While Spanish was used by all teachers as the main language of instruction, teacher linguistic upskilling in one instance would enhance student learning.
- In all lessons, students were given opportunities to work together in pairs or groups and in most instances students engaged well with the tasks set.
- Some students in the lessons observed had difficulty communicating in the target language. To improve students' competence and confidence in the target language, it is recommended that teachers devise activities pair or group work which is specifically designed to give students opportunities to speak to each other in Spanish about the topic being studied.
- Most of the lessons observed were well paced. In one instance, students finished five minutes before the end of the lesson and were not given any further tasks. Teachers should ensure that students remain actively engaged until the end of each lesson.
- While there was a good range of student activities which addressed the different language skills in some lessons, there was scope for further development in other lessons. It is recommended that all teachers should plan for a range of activities in lessons.
- All of the class groups observed were mixed ability. In one lesson, students were offered choices of differentiated classwork and homework. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- In most of the lessons observed, the more able students could have been challenged further. All teachers should ensure that individual lesson planning caters for the full ability range within the classroom by supporting or challenging learners as appropriate.
- A shared learning platform was used in one lesson to facilitate the setting of homework and an online quiz was used to revise learning in another lesson. Students in junior cycle and TY have tablet devices; there was scope to incorporate these more creatively into lessons.
- Teachers shared the learning intentions of the lessons with students at the start of all the lessons observed. In one lesson, learning was reviewed at the end of the lesson and it is recommended that this good practice be extended to all lessons.
- Teachers' assessment of student written work varied in the student copybooks reviewed. Occasional good practice was seen, where teachers marked students' work and included comments on how they could improve. In some instances, teachers stamped uncorrected work. This practice should be avoided, as it may suggest to students that their work is error-free. To help guide student improvement, the department should further develop and implement formative assessment strategies in the correction of students' written work.
- Classroom management was very good in most lessons. All teachers created a positive atmosphere in lessons, with lots of positive affirmation of students.

- All lessons were held in teacher-based classrooms which enabled teachers to display posters and student work. There is scope to incorporate classroom displays into lessons to further enhance student engagement.
- Homework was set in all lessons observed.
- There was scope to further develop literacy and numeracy skills within the lessons observed.

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

- Subject provision for Spanish is very good. The study of a language in junior cycle is mandatory. All students study Spanish and French in first year. Spanish is offered as an optional subject thereafter.
- Students are given the opportunity to participate in cross-curricular and extra-curricular activities including exchange trips to Spain.
- School examinations are set collaboratively by teachers and all students have regular oral examinations.
- Teachers regularly participate in continuous professional development (CPD) in Spanish. The school provides financial support for CPD attended by staff.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Planning at departmental level is at a very advanced stage. Plans are outcome-led and theme-based with differentiated learning outcomes for each topic, topic-linked methodologies and resources, many of which are hyperlinked within the plans.
- All teachers actively use the departmental schemes of work and annotate and adapt them throughout the year. There was evidence of year-on-year development in departmental planning. This is very good practice.
- While departmental planning is very good, there is scope for further development in the individual planning of some lessons.
- There is very good collaboration within the department and between language departments in the school. A shared bank of electronic resources is accessible to all staff.
- There are regular departmental meetings and appropriate minutes are maintained. It is suggested that the informal meetings which are held to discuss teaching and learning be referred to in the minutes.
- Parents are informed of their child's progress via school reports, parent-teacher meetings, information evenings, the school website and the school journal. Parents also have access to the school's shared-learning platform.

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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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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