

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Spanish  
REPORT**

**Coláiste Ráithín  
Bray, County Wicklow  
Roll number: 70821M**

**Date of inspection: 16 March 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>Dates of inspection</b>	3 and 16 March 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 class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Overall, teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed, although there are some areas where there is scope for development.
- Spanish was used as the main language of instruction at all times by teachers, and very good use was made of various strategies to maintain the target language; at times, the target language could have been used more regularly by students.
- Many assessment for learning strategies were observed in lessons, but possibilities for improvement exist with regard to the assessment of students' written work and the sharing of learning intentions with students.
- Very good provision is made for modern languages in the school.
- A good start has been made to planning in the department but further development is required in this area.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that teachers extend assessment for learning strategies to students' written work to inform student about their strengths and areas where they could improve.
  - It is recommended that the department develop subject planning further to include more detailed references to methodologies, resources and appropriate assessments.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Ráithín is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of the Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board with a current enrolment of 268 students. Irish is the main language of instruction in the school. Spanish is an optional subject at junior cycle and it may be studied alongside either French or German. Spanish is also available as an option to Transition Year and senior cycle students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning was very good in all the lessons observed. A range of teaching methodologies was observed in lessons and these were appropriate to students' learning needs.
- Spanish was used as the main language of instruction at all times by teachers. Good use was also made of various strategies to maintain the target language. The linguistic competence of the Spanish teachers was of a very high standard.
- In some instances Spanish was used regularly and naturally by students as their language of communication with the teacher in lessons. This good practice should be extended. Teachers should encourage all students to maximise their use of the target language with the teacher and with each other.
- The school uses a Spanish textbook with English exercises and explanatory text. Students should be encouraged to answer comprehension questions in Irish rather than English. It is not good practise to use English in Irish-medium education. The use of English by students in lessons should also be discouraged and Irish used where necessary.
- At the beginning of one lesson, learning intentions were shared with students and links were made to students' prior learning. It is recommended that this good practice be implemented across all lessons and further progressed to include a review of student learning at the end.
- Connections to students' real life experiences were made regularly in lessons which aided student engagement.
- Some differentiation was seen in lessons, for example, differentiated questioning was used effectively to consolidate learning. It is suggested that teachers further explore differentiation strategies and implement them in lessons and in homework activities. Teachers should give particular consideration to planning for more challenging activities for the more able students.
- Games and drama were used to very good effect in the lessons observed to encourage student oral use of the target language. In one instance, a game was combined with drama very successfully and students had to write and then perform a short drama based on cards they had selected at random.
- Attention was paid to correct pronunciation of the language which is very good practice.
- Opportunities were provided for independent learning as well as for collaborative learning. Oral literacy was developed in all lessons through pair or group work. Students were actively and productively engaged in learning in all the lessons observed.
- A print rich environment in the Spanish classroom and the inclusion of Spanish background music during tasks helped create a Spanish atmosphere in lessons which was conducive to learning.

- Classroom management was very good in all the lessons observed. Behaviour of students was very good and there was a positive relationship between students and teachers. There was regular affirmation of students by teachers, which contributed to their engagement with the target language.
- Many assessment for learning strategies were observed in lessons. It is recommended that this good practice be extended to students' written work by guiding improvement through the provision of regular formative written comments in their copybooks.
- Examples of literacy and grammar in context were observed in lessons. Examples included, drawing attention to spelling conventions as they occurred in context, and using the roll call to practise different forms of verbs.
- Integration of numeracy was observed in lessons, for example, lessons were planned to incorporate simple arithmetic in the target language into the topic being studied.

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

- Very good provision is made for modern languages in the school. Three modern languages are provided in the curriculum and students have the option of studying two languages throughout the school. This is particularly commendable for a small school.
- All four language skills are assessed in school examinations and this is good practice. The school participates in the optional oral examinations at Junior Certificate.
- A good range of resources is available in the Spanish room, including reading materials in the target language.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A good start has been made to planning in the department but further development is required in this area. The Spanish department should further develop subject plans to include learning intentions which are time-bound. These should be differentiated where appropriate. Schemes of work should include references to methodologies, resources and assessments appropriate to each theme.
- Currently, there is a yearly planning meeting but no minutes are maintained. It is suggested that a modern languages department be created to enable discussion of teaching and learning matters. This would also facilitate collaboration across languages. These meetings should be held regularly and minutes should be maintained. It is also recommended that the department analyse and review student attainment and use their findings to inform future planning.
- Individual planning was very good for the lessons observed.
- There is good communication with parents and guardians via school reports, parent-teacher meetings and the school diary.

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.