An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Latin

REPORT

St Columba’s College
Whitechurch, Dublin 16
Roll number: 60320H

Date of inspection: 21 March 2014
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN LATIN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>21 March 2014</th>
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<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</strong></td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teacher</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall with just a few areas for development.
- There was a good emphasis on reading Latin and on learning vocabulary, grammar and the rules of syntax in context.
- Students had an opportunity to work collaboratively in one lesson.
- Students were very well supported in their learning and there was a warm rapport between students and the teacher.
- Whole-school support is very good.
- Planning for the subject is satisfactory but there is scope for development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The learning intention should be shared with students at the start of the lesson and learning should be summarised at the end of the lesson.
- Students should be encouraged to become more independent as learners; building on existing good practice, they should have more opportunities to collaborate.
- A wider range of resources, including digital resources, should be used to cater for the diversity of learners.
- Planning should be reviewed in a number of areas identified in this report and the pace of syllabus delivery should be reviewed.
INTRODUCTION
St Columba’s College is a fee-paying school for boys and girls, most of whom are boarders. It has a current enrolment of 295 students. Latin is a core subject for first-year students. It is provided as an optional subject in years two and three of the Junior Certificate programme, in the Leaving Certificate programme and in the compulsory Transition Year programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
• The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall with just a few areas for development.
• There was an appropriate emphasis on acquiring a good reading knowledge of the Latin language through the teaching of vocabulary, grammar and syntactical rules in context. Many students were confident in their knowledge of case and verb endings but some need more reinforcement.
• Good links were made to students’ experience when learning new Latin vocabulary. It is very commendable that word derivation was a learning focus in a junior cycle lesson observed, as this reinforces language development in English.
• Teacher modelling was very good and students were taught to read the Latin text aloud with accuracy, understanding and feeling.
• The text and the board were the resources used. It is recommended that a more varied range of resources be deployed to cater for the diversity of learners.
• There was a high level of teacher support and students were patiently led through the translation of the text. However, there were limited opportunities to work independently and collaboratively. In one lesson students worked in a group and this good practice should be developed further with specific roles assigned to each student. In another case, a task was set and students purposefully engaged in completing it while the teacher circulated and intervened from time to time with helpful advice. Building on this, more opportunities to encourage independent problem solving should be generated.
• It is recommended that differentiated methods and resources be used to cater for those of all abilities. Supplementary tasks need to be set for those who finish early.
• In a Leaving Certificate class, students were given an excellent understanding of historical events surrounding the accession of the emperor Nerva. Traditional instruction methods catered well for this small group in the upper range of ability. Students were challenged and engaged.
• Student attainment is very good. High expectations are set in the subject.
• Homework is regularly set and assessment for learning practice was noted in oral feedback.
• Junior cycle students participate in a Latin play at the end of the school year and this gives excellent practice in speaking the language.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT
• Whole-school support is of a high quality. The school is deeply committed to provision for the subject as it is central to its ethos.
• Timetabling allocation is very good with four periods in each year of the junior cycle and in TY and five in the senior cycle.

• All students have access to the subject and all take it at higher level. Students are taught in a mixed-ability setting.

• The dedication of the teacher to Latin and to the students of St Columba’s College is evidenced through provision for students who are not in mainstream classes and a small number study the subject outside the timetable.

• There is a very good school library with a stock of books for Latin, a budget is provided for the subject and information and communication technology facilities and resources are available in the subject though not used.

• Engagement with the teacher professional network, CAI-T, would provide valuable opportunities for subject-specific continuing professional development and active engagement with the association is recommended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• Planning for the subject is satisfactory but there is scope for development.

• The plan should be drafted within a learning outcomes framework integrating syllabus-based learning outcomes to be achieved with an outline of learning activities and resources to be used and assessment methods to be applied.

• The pace of syllabus delivery should be reviewed. Currently, too much new material, for example, Roman History and the prescribed poetry, is left until third year and this puts enormous pressure on students in the examination year. Both History and poetry should be introduced much earlier. This needs to be reflected in the overall yearly schemes.

• Currently, students in the senior cycle are encouraged to answer the composition question in the Leaving Certificate examination which is one of two options. Consequently, they do not receive specific pre-examination practice in the comprehension question, the second option. As the composition section may not suit all students, this approach should be reviewed to ensure that students have sufficient choice in the examination to meet their individual needs.

• The junior cycle text is the Ecce Romani series. To complement the text, it is recommended that a range of additional resources, to include digital resources, be documented in the plan for the subject. Planning for the acquisition of resources should be documented. Texts currently in use should also be noted.

• Passages of unseen translation in the Junior Certificate examination are not likely to gloss words contained in the Junior Certificate Defined Vocabulary List published by the National Council for Curriculum and Assessment (NCCA). This list features vocabulary based on a reconciliation of the three recommended syllabus texts one of which is Ecce Romani. Regular use of the list should be encouraged from early in second year to complement and reinforce vocabulary encountered in context when reading the Ecce Romani text and this should be referenced in the plan.

• There should be specific reference to the manner in which the subject supports the whole-school literacy strategy.
• Examination outcomes and other data should be analysed to direct planning for the subject and this should be in the plan in line with good school self-evaluation practice.
• Given the range of areas common to both subjects, opportunities for cross-curricular planning with the Classical Studies department should be actively sought and records maintained.

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