

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Latin
REPORT**

**St Mary's College
Rathmines, Dublin 6
Roll number: 60560E**

Date of inspection: 12 March 2014



**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 LATIN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	12 March 2014
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 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning is good and there were examples of very good practice in all lessons.
- Text content integrates social and literary themes.
- Etymology receives appropriate attention and this supports literacy development.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively but there is scope for greater usage.
- Homework is regularly assigned and corrected in class.
- Planning is good on the whole, and the Transition Year (TY) plan has many varied and stimulating elements.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The learning outcomes to be achieved should be shared with students at the start of lessons.
 - Learning activities should be varied to include more active, independent and collaborative learning.
 - Building on existing good work regarding the reading of Latin, more reinforcement of vocabulary, grammar and the rules of syntax are needed for some students.
 - The subject plan should be written within a learning outcomes framework that integrates assessment, methods and resources.
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INTRODUCTION

St Mary's College, Rathmines is a fee-paying school for boys and has a current enrolment of 430. It provides the Junior Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate programme, and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme. Latin was introduced to enrich the curriculum in 2001 and to enhance the quality of educational experience available to students in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good and there were examples of very good practice in all lessons.
- Preparation for lessons ensured that learning was purposeful. It is recommended that the specific intended learning outcomes be written on the board at the start of lessons and these should be reviewed at the end to assess if learning has been achieved by all students.
- Resources used included text and the board. ICT was used effectively for illustrative purposes but there is scope for more widespread usage.
- Text content integrates social and literary themes.
- Good links were made with prior learning. Students read aloud from the text which is commended. Frequent opportunities of this kind should be created so that students gain an understanding of the overall structure of the language.
- Attention was paid to etymology and this supports student literacy development. This is commended.
- Questioning was designed to check understanding of content read. Students should answer by repeating aloud and correctly, the words of the text to support answers in English.
- It is very appropriate that vocabulary is encountered and learned in a reading context and the text used is the *Cambridge Latin Course*. This facilitates the development of translation and comprehension skills.
- Students were encouraged to write new words down in their copybooks. To build on this, students should learn correct retrieval, analysis and application of vocabulary from a Latin dictionary. All students should have access to a dictionary whether text or digital.
- 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 the *Cambridge Latin Course*. It is important that a systematic approach is taken to ensure that students learn from the list to complement and reinforce contextual encounters. Some students in lessons visited were not secure in their knowledge.
- While collaborative learning tasks are assigned in TY, there is considerable scope for more varied learning activities in the other year groups to cater for the diversity of learners. Students should be given regular independent learning opportunities and should be required to develop their problem-solving skills.
- Classroom management was very good and learners were supported and affirmed.

- Students were engaged by the tasks and demonstrated interest in the subject, for example, through their concentration on tasks and through their questions.
- Homework was assigned regularly and checked in class. From time to time, copybooks should be collected and corrected to create a clearer profile of individual learners and give written directional feedback in line with good assessment for learning practice.
- Attainment is good, expectations are high and students are encouraged to achieve to their full potential.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is a very good level of whole-school support for the subject.
- Latin is available in all programmes and almost all take it at higher level. A compulsory ten-week module lasting one term is provided for all first year students and the subject is optional thereafter. It is very positive that all students experience Latin. Currently there are twenty-one students in second year and seventeen in third studying the subject.
- Latin is an option in the TY programme. There is a good level of interest with ten students studying it. Currently, there is no uptake in fifth and sixth year. The school is willing to provide Latin at Leaving Certificate level. However, competition from other subjects is an obstacle. Creative ways of timetabling in the senior cycle might be explored.
- Timetabling allocation is good with four lessons in each year of the junior cycle and four also in TY.
- Resources are very good and a budget is provided. There are good ICT facilities in the classroom and mobile laptops are available for student use. Each teacher has been issued with a tablet device.
- The Latin teacher demonstrates excellent engagement with continuing professional development (CPD), and has attended many subject-specific events as well as the generic school-based courses.
- The school supports a trip to Rome for TY students and this is highly commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is a good subject plan in place. Detailed yearly schemes chronologically map out learning in the junior cycle and this is very good. It may be advisable to start the prescribed poetry section of the course earlier in second year to allow sufficient time for revision at the end of third year.
- The ten-week module content provides an interesting introduction to Latin. It is very commendable that attention to civilisation and history gives students a positive experience of the subject. The module should reflect the debt of English to Latin in order to enhance students' vocabulary acquisition and to support the school's literacy strategy.
- The TY programme is reflective of the programme's principles and is very varied and stimulating. Interesting elements such as linguistics are introduced. Time is devoted to preparation for the trip to Rome, and some lessons in tourist Italian are included.

- Students have the opportunity to work collaboratively on projects and to carry out research.
- The programme is highly commended for its creativity. The text used for language is the *Open University Preparatory Booklet*. However, for students who wish to choose Latin for Leaving Certificate a great deal of language revision would be necessary as some students encountered in TY did not demonstrate a secure knowledge of basic grammar and syntax. This needs to be considered and texts reviewed to ensure they meet all needs.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.