

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Italian**  
**REPORT**

**St Paul's CBS**  
**North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7**  
**Roll number: 604300**

**Date of inspection: 1 April 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 ITALIAN**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	31 March, 1 April 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teacher</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teacher</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Subject provision and whole-school support for Italian is very good.
- Students' access to Italian is very good, and uptake is fairly healthy.
- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was in the range of good to fair.
- Students' oral competence shows considerable scope for development.
- There is considerable scope for development in regard to subject planning.
- The main recommendations of the last subject inspection report are still relevant.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A definite strategy to make Italian the language of the classroom should be devised and implemented.
  - The subject plan should be developed further, as recommended in this report.
  - A shift away from translation and paper-based work towards a more oral, communicative approach in both teaching and assessment, as is required by the syllabus, is recommended.
  - To give students greater responsibility for their own learning, it is recommended that the principles and practices of assessment for learning (AfL) be adopted.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

St Paul's Christian Brothers' School is a voluntary secondary school for boys, situated in the north inner-city area of Dublin. The school participates in the DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools) action plan, and current enrolment stands at 245 students. Italian is offered in the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied programmes. The last subject inspection in Italian was carried out in May, 2003.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Three lessons were observed in the course of the evaluation: a first-year lesson, a TY lesson and a fifth-year lesson. Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was in the range of good to fair.
- The lessons were well prepared and a range of learning activities was evident in most of the lessons, including pair work and role play. The layout of the classroom was conducive to communicative activities, but there is scope to develop a more print-rich environment to support students' learning.
- Rapport between teacher and students was good: the students' efforts were affirmed and their errors were corrected sensitively. In all cases, students engaged well with the planned activities, and some were enthusiastic about their learning.
- The teacher modelled good spoken Italian, and Italian was the language of instruction in most of the lessons. The TY lesson, an introduction to Italian art and artists, was conducted in English, and opportunities to teach and reinforce language and literacy were not fully exploited.
- Overall, the students' use of Italian for classroom communication was less than satisfactory, and their level of oral competence in general showed considerable scope for development. It is recommended that a definite strategy to make Italian the language of classroom communication be implemented.
- In one of the lessons, there was a warm-up revision activity where the students answered questions orally: it is recommended that this type of conversation, based on the students' own experiences, be used more widely and regularly so as to encourage them to be more confident in speaking the language. This practice will also facilitate the ongoing revision and consolidation of learning.
- There was a tendency to rely too much on translation to and from English, both for teaching and assessment. A shift away from translation and paper-based work towards a more oral, communicative approach in both teaching and assessment is recommended.
- To promote greater learner autonomy, it is recommended that the principles and practices of AfL be adopted. For example: beginning all lessons with clear statements of learning objectives and success criteria; self-assessment and peer assessment based on the learning objectives; and assessment of learning outcomes towards the close of the lesson.

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

- French and Italian are the two modern European languages offered in St Paul's CBS. A taster programme is offered to all first-year students in both languages before they make

their choice of subjects. This practice of facilitating an informed student choice is commended.

- At the time of the last subject inspection, the status of Italian in the school was precarious. The subject is now well established and there is a full-time, fully-qualified teacher of Italian on staff.
- Italian is taught in a base classroom and there is a good range of textbooks and other resources available for the subject. It is recommended that an electronic folder be set up to house teaching and learning resources, including the subject plan.
- The level of uptake of Italian is fairly healthy: in the current school year about one third of the first-year students are taking the subject and half of the second years, but there is no third-year class. All TY students take a course in Italian culture and language, even those who have not studied the language in junior cycle.
- In the present school year, about 45% of junior cycle students are not studying either Italian or French. In the interests of offering students a broader educational experience and enhancing their options for third level, it is recommended that school management consider ways of increasing the uptake of foreign languages.
- School management is considering setting up a cross-languages department to include teachers of Irish, French and Italian, with arrangements for shared planning and appropriate continuing professional development (CPD). Such a development would be very helpful. Professional collaborative review of teaching and learning, including peer observation, could also be considered in this context.
- There is no record in the subject plan of engagement in CPD. Membership of the Association of Teachers of Italian is recommended, and participation by the teacher in the association's workshops and other relevant CPD, including web-based courses such as those hosted by the Post-Primary Languages Initiative, is also recommended.
- To encourage and affirm students' attainment in spoken Italian, it is recommended that the school consider offering the optional Junior Certificate oral examination. It is also recommended that the school apply for an Italian language assistant under the Department's scheme, as a support to teacher and students.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- There is considerable scope for development in regard to subject planning. A handwritten subject plan for each year group was available for inspection. The plan outlines the main aims and objectives, a list of materials and the course content month-by-month, expressed as a list of topics and grammatical functions.
- The subject plan does not, as yet, include details of methodology, assessment or long-term developmental plans for the subject. Neither does it contain specific learning outcomes in the various language skills for each year group, as recommended in the previous subject inspection report.
- In developing the subject plan, it is recommended that the learning objectives be articulated in the form of student-friendly 'can-do' statements along with success criteria, in accord with AfL principles. This would help the students to take responsibility for their own learning and would be an aid for assessment and revision.

- An analysis of the last five years' certificate examination results has been carried out. It shows an increase in the percentage of students taking higher level in the Junior Certificate examination in the past two years, but no student has taken higher level in Leaving Certificate over the five years. It is recommended that, in line with best DEIS practice, the subject plan set out targets and strategies for improved uptake and attainment at both Junior and Leaving Certificate levels.

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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 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.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management notes the recognition and endorsement of good practice where applicable. It also notes the identification of areas for improvement and looks forward to supporting the subject department in implementing the recommendations made.

**Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

Since the inspection a Languages department encompassing teachers of Irish, French and Italian has been established as a model to facilitate the sharing of resources and the identification of ongoing pedagogical developments in the area of language teaching. The school is positively disposed towards acquiring a Language Assistant through the Department of Education scheme and will explore this possibility. The Board of Management continues to support teacher membership of their subject associations and has established a small fund to assist teachers in meeting membership costs. This report identifies the increase in the number of students taking Italian at Junior Certificate higher level in the last two years. The Board of Management plans to grow this development and to look at attainment levels for Leaving Certificate with the intention of supporting the subject department in increasing the numbers taking the subject at Leaving Certificate higher level.