

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Latin
REPORT

Clongowes Wood College
Clane, Co Kildare
Roll number: 61720F

Date of inspection: 22 November 2013



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	22 November 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to deputy principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good with many examples of excellent practice.
- There is a strong focus on the development of core subject skills and the promotion of higher-order thinking.
- Classroom practice places a very good emphasis on literacy development.
- Students are encouraged to become independent learners in a very supportive environment.
- Whole-school support is very good in almost all areas.
- Subject planning is very comprehensive with just a few areas for development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The subject plan should link learning outcomes to methods, resources and assessment to achieve greater cohesion, the Transition Year (TY) plan should be reviewed and analysis of examination results and other data could now be used to feed into planning, teaching and learning.
 - The school should examine ways in which to achieve better distribution of lessons across the week for some class groups.
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INTRODUCTION

Clongowes Wood College is a fee-paying boarding school that provides Latin as an optional subject in the Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and in the optional Transition Year (TY) programmes. It has a current enrolment of 442 boys.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning was very good with many examples of excellent practice.
- Lessons were well planned and both pace and content were appropriate with a very good level of challenge noted. Resources used were made ready in advance ensuring an efficient lesson sequence so that learning was purposeful and orderly. The quality of visual material was very good and designed to engage students and to reinforce learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used very effectively to enhance skills development.
- The learning intention was clear in all lessons observed. Building on this, it is suggested that the specific learning to be achieved be written on the board and then reviewed at the end of lessons to check if this has been achieved.
- Methods were student centred. Account was taken of the need to differentiate for students with diverse learning needs. Questioning technique was very effective: there was appropriate variety and students had ample time to respond. Of particular merit was the emphasis on higher-order questioning. It is very commendable that students worked collaboratively in a lesson observed.
- Students learned the skills necessary to become independent learners and they were well-supported in their learning. This practice is highly commended.
- Both comprehension and translation skills were practised as students worked individually and collectively. They built on previous knowledge and experience, for example vocabulary learned and grammatical constructions encountered. Students set about tackling unseen translations using the supports provided in the passage and contextual clues observed.
- Students were encouraged to explore the etymology of the English language through their study of Latin. The processes involved effectively supported literacy development.
- Students demonstrated understanding and knowledge of the subject both in their exchanges with the teacher and in their evident enthusiasm and willingness to engage with the content. Attainment is good and students are encouraged to achieve to their full potential.
- The defined vocabulary for the Junior Certificate receives attention, but consideration should be given to making this both regular and systematic in view of the identified weaknesses nationally in candidates answering as articulated in the Chief Examiner's Report (2008) published by the State Examinations Commission.
- Classroom management is very good and routines were observed.
- Assessment practice is very good with a clear focus on assessment for learning. Copybooks examined indicated very high quality assessment that directed and supported student learning. Student learning was monitored in lessons also.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- In almost all areas, the subject is very well supported. Uptake is good in third year but there are signs of a downward trend which may have a bearing on provision in the medium to long term. Senior cycle numbers fluctuate. In conjunction with the Latin department, the school should explore additional ways in which to promote subject uptake.
- Resources are very good. The discrete subject classroom is fully equipped with a very good range of text-based and ICT resources. There is access to an excellent school library with a section dedicated to Latin that is being developed and enriched on an ongoing basis. The library is regularly used by Latin students for private reading and research purposes.
- Timetabling allocation is appropriate. However distribution of lessons needs to be reviewed: in some cases, lessons are clustered so that there is lack of continuity and this does not create ideal learning conditions for Latin. The school should explore ways in which to improve current distribution when next it engages in timetabling for the subject.
- One highly-qualified teacher is currently deployed, there is demonstrable commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) that is encouraged by the school. The teacher is involved in a community of learning with subject teachers from other schools and also attends events organised by the teachers' professional network, the Classical Association of Ireland – Teachers (CAIT). This is highly commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A comprehensive subject plan has been developed with detailed schemes of work, chronologically mapped. Resources are itemised. Specific learning outcomes have been developed for all year groups and programmes and this is very good work. To develop what is a very good plan further, and to ensure more cohesion between core elements, it is recommended that horizontal links be made between syllabus content, learning outcomes to be achieved, methods, resources and assessment.
- Commendably, examination results have been analysed; in the context of school self-evaluation and forward planning, the department should examine how evidence, including data from internally and externally assessed learning, can inform all aspects of teaching, learning and assessment.
- The TY programme has many interesting aspects. For example, students have the opportunity to listen to Latin language broadcasts. This is excellent since it is designed to stimulate interest while developing a very good range of linguistic skills. Commendably, the Latin language is fundamental to the programme while history and civilisation also feature strongly. This is appropriate given the need to bridge learning between the junior and senior cycles.
- With regard to Roman History, teaching and learning approaches should seek to avoid an over-emphasis on Leaving Certificate content in the Roman History section of the TY programme.
- To build on the very good work already completed, the department should now examine how the TY plan can be designed to take account of the broad learning needs of all students including, and in particular, those who may not study the subject in the Leaving Certificate programme. For example, the plan could articulate the very good classroom

practice observed in relation to literacy development, taking full advantage of the strengths of the Latin language in this regard.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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, 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 welcomes the subject inspection report on the teaching of Latin in Clongowes Wood College. Confident in the quality of teaching and learning that happens in this subject area, the Board of Management is happy to have this confirmed by the Inspection process. The report highlights the quality of engagement by teacher and students, the rigorous planning, the range of resources, and whole-school support for the subject. The Board is particularly pleased to see the promotion of higher-order thinking.

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

With regard to the main recommendations, the Board wishes to point out that the Transition Year plan is reviewed on an annual basis and that examination data is a factor in the on-going development of the subject. The second recommendation relating to the distribution of classes across the week, presents a difficulty. The double period in Latin, to which this recommendation refers, serves the purpose of providing an extended period of time in which independent learning and cooperative learning can be facilitated. This is in line with the thinking behind the proposed Junior Certificate reforms which emphasise the need for longer class periods in order to enable more active learning.

The Board of Management is grateful to the Inspectorate for its supportive role in the promotion of Latin and its helpful recommendations.