Subject Inspection of Latin

REPORT

St Patrick’s Classical School
Navan, County Meath
Roll number: 64350N

Date of inspection: 12 May 2011
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN LATIN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>Date(s) of inspection</th>
<th>9, 12 May 2011</th>
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<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods, five lessons.</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 teachers</td>
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<td>- Interaction with students</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

- Teachers are very committed to the subject and careful consideration is given to choice of texts in the junior cycle.

- Students have an opportunity to learn in settings outside the classroom.

- Students learn in a mixed-ability setting with a considerable range of ability.

- Good monitoring of students was observed in most lessons but a small number of students are not participating fully in learning.

- The school retains its commitment to the subject and timetabling is appropriate. Student access is good although TY students do not have the opportunity to choose the subject.

- Attainment is good on the whole but planning and delivery should target improvement at those in the top range of ability. Uptake of ordinary level is relatively high in the Junior Certificate, however, context is a factor.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lesson planning and delivery should be reviewed to take the diversity of students’ learning needs into consideration; resources and teaching strategies should be designed to actively engage all students in their learning; opportunities should be created for collaborative and independent learning.

- All students should be monitored in all lessons to ensure their full engagement in learning.

- Learning outcomes should be shared with students at the start of lessons and lessons should be reviewed with students at the end to ensure the outcomes have been achieved. Learning should be summarised.

- Differentiation should be built into all aspects of planning and delivery, and all planning should be firmly underpinned by the specific syllabus aims and objectives.
INTRODUCTION

St Patrick’s Classical School is a voluntary, non-fee-paying secondary school with an enrolment of 817 boys. It offers Latin as an optional subject in the Junior Certificate (JC) and Leaving Certificate (LC) programmes but not in the optional Transition Year (TY).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teachers prepared lessons well for content in relation to grammar and recommended texts. However limited resources and methodology did not take the diversity of students’ abilities and learning styles into consideration. Planning for learning should be reviewed. Specific learning outcomes should be written on the board at the start of all lessons. Lessons should be reviewed with students at the end to ensure the intended outcomes have been achieved. Given that classes are organised in mixed-ability settings, it is essential that there is differentiation in content taught, resources used and teaching strategies deployed.

- It is positive that choice of textbooks is reviewed regularly. Since classrooms are equipped with good information and communications technology (ICT) and audio-visual resources, full advantage should be taken of on-line ICT and existing audio and visual supports available to cater for different learning styles as none was observed in use. The board was used in a minority of lessons and its wider use would have aided learning in all lessons. While some good practice was noted in using the classroom as an additional resource to create a stimulating learning environment for the subject, this practice should be extended.

- Lessons observed commenced purposefully with vocabulary and homework review followed by text translation. In some cases there was overt linkage to prior learning and this is commended. In general, students need to be reminded that grammar, syntax and vocabulary are tools to develop reading skills in order to access the meaning of the text and are not ends in themselves. Students should be required to read Latin aloud as this is a specific syllabus requirement.

- Good progress is being made with the prescribed text in the senior cycle. Revision was underway in the examination class and this was appropriate. The course was almost covered in the junior cycle examination class. Pacing of syllabus delivery and of lessons should be examined to prioritise new learning.

- Attainment is good on the whole but planning and delivery should target improvement at those in the top range of ability. Uptake of ordinary level in the JC is relatively high, however, context is a factor.

- There was an over-reliance on teacher-led activity in lessons through questioning and prompting. Scaffolding should be graduated according to student ability. Opportunities for independent learning should be created to challenge able students.

- Student learning was good in most lessons. In a good number of lessons most students were engaged and there was a good level of enthusiasm. It was notable that in the senior cycle there was greater confidence in answering. In a minority of lessons, students either did not participate at all or participated rarely. It is strongly recommended that active and collaborative learning strategies be used for variety, skills development and inclusion.

- It is commendable that positive teacher comments (in Latin in some cases) were written on some copybooks examined. Teacher monitoring of students was good in a number of
lessons. It is recommended that all students be monitored at all times and class seating should be arranged to ensure that all students are within the teacher’s visual range. While most students were engaged, disruptive behaviour compromised the learning atmosphere in a very small number of cases and effective intervention took place very late in the lesson.

**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Timetabling allocation is appropriate to meet syllabus requirements and Latin is well supported. There is good access to the subject except in TY. To promote continuity of learning, this could be reviewed.
- Two committed teachers are deployed and one is involved in the subject association.
- More could be done to promote Latin as a subject at pre-entry level.
- It is positive that the school tour is used as a learning opportunity for students. A record of the most recent tour will be written up in the school magazine.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Informal departmental structures are in place. A brief record of meetings is submitted to management. No records are kept for planning purposes and this should be reviewed.
- Planning maps out syllabus content within specific timeframes in the JC and LC programmes and this is commended. A good variety of assessment modes is recorded. The subject plan should be firmly underpinned by all syllabus aims and objectives. There should be documented planning for professional development.
- History and civilisation are introduced to junior cycle students through reading the selected text. The discrete prescribed history and civilisation elements of the course should be formally integrated into planning throughout the three years of the junior cycle.
- Common papers should be set for common levels in house tests to harmonise syllabus delivery. Summative assessment outcomes should be routinely analysed and data used to inform planning for learning.
- Attendance is not recorded routinely in all classes. Since accurate student profiling requires careful record keeping it is recommended that the good practice of recording attendance noted in some lessons be replicated in all. Records of summative assessment are maintained.
- Standard reporting procedures to parents are in place such as meetings, formal written reports and the student journal. It is very commendable that in a small number of lessons, a teacher used the journal to praise the efforts of students.

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

*Published May 2012*