

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Spanish  
REPORT**

**Loreto Abbey Secondary School  
Dalkey, Co. Dublin  
Roll number: 60130C**

**Date of inspection: 10 November 2015**



**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 SPANISH**

---

**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection:</b>	<b>9 and 10 November 2015</b>
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- In the lessons observed, the overall quality of teaching and learning was good.
- There was very good use of Spanish as the language of instruction by all teachers in the lessons observed, but students were not always facilitated to speak Spanish in class.
- There was a very positive atmosphere in all lessons observed.
- Some good work has been completed in department planning to date.
- There is very good provision for languages within the school, with all students studying two languages in first year.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should place an increased focus on differentiation of resources and activities in lessons in order to fully support or challenge students as appropriate.
  - Teachers should extend planning for students' oral activities through Spanish to all lessons.
  - All teachers should implement the whole-school approach to assessment for learning.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Loreto Abbey Secondary School is a fee-paying school with a current enrolment of 597 girls, under the trusteeship of the Loreto Education Trust. The school serves an urban catchment area in South Dublin. The Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme are provided in the school, as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- In the lessons observed, the overall quality of teaching and learning was good. In a small number of lessons, very high quality teaching and learning was observed and, in a significant minority of lessons, there was scope for development in differentiation and in facilitating students' oral Spanish development.
- The intended lesson content was outlined at the start of most lessons. In a small number of lessons, learning intentions were expressed at the outset and reviewed again at the end of the lesson. To build on this very good practice, it is recommended that in all lessons learning intentions be shared with students and subsequently reviewed.
- There was very good pace in all lessons observed, with a variety of effective teaching methodologies and resources being used. Methodologies of particular note included the manipulation of aural transcripts that further enhanced language development, the use of a school-made Spanish video that increased student engagement in class and the innovative use of film that encouraged student creativity.
- In the lessons observed, all teachers made very good use of Spanish as the language of instruction.
- In a small number of lessons, Spanish was not the main language of communication used by students during pair work and this should be redressed. It is recommended that when planning for activities, teachers give consideration to providing students with the necessary tools and opportunities to enable them to communicate effectively in Spanish. In one lesson, students devised and practised a role play which gave ample opportunity for oral development in Spanish. All teachers should plan to include at least one activity in lessons that facilitates students' oral skills development.
- Language classes are mixed-ability throughout the school. The range of students' responses to both the content and challenge of the tasks set was varied and, given the mixed-ability nature of the class groups, teachers should place greater emphasis on differentiation in lessons in order to fully support or challenge students, as appropriate.
- Impeccable student behaviour, with lots of affirmation of students by teachers led to a very positive learning environment.
- Where teachers were based in their own classrooms the environments were print-rich with displays of student work, including a very nice cultural display.
- Homework was set in all lessons observed and a review of copybooks revealed that this is regular practice.
- There was evidence of assessment for learning practices in a small number of students' copybooks. In one class, students evaluated their own work, identifying their strengths and areas for development; this was subsequently assessed by the teacher. In addition, peer-assessment, which was monitored by the teacher, was seen in a few copybooks. These approaches are highly commended and should be adopted for all classes.

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

- There is very good provision for languages in the school. All students study two languages in first year and may choose to continue with the study of both languages up to Leaving Certificate.
- Most teachers are based in their own classrooms which has enabled them to enhance the learning environment for Spanish.
- The school has adopted a whole-school approach to assessment for learning, which is commended. This approach to assessment is being implemented by some Spanish teachers and should now be extended throughout the Spanish department.
- The school has a Transition Year exchange programme with a school in Spain where students have the opportunity to spend a month in a Spanish school and this experience has given these students a very good command of Spanish.
- Valuable initiatives which help to promote languages within the school include a weekly language club, an international film club and a structure involving language prefects.
- The school has a languages' department rather than individual language departments and this encourages collaboration between languages.
- On-going continuous professional development in Spanish is undertaken by members of the department and the linguistic competence of the Spanish teachers was very good.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- In the lessons observed, there was very good planning for classroom resources. Individual planning was very good, as was individual record-keeping.
- A very good start has been made to long-term planning for Spanish, with time-bound, outcomes-led schemes of work. References are made to resources, methodologies and assessment, as well as literacy, numeracy and cross-curricular links. It is recommended that the department plans by syllabus themes rather than following the layout of textbooks. Plans should then be progressed to ensure that references are theme-specific which will make the plans of more practical use to teachers.
- The TY Spanish plan has recently been reviewed and is currently being developed.
- It is suggested that consideration be given to further extending the collaborative production and sharing of resources for lessons.
- Subject department minutes reveal attention is paid to the analysis and review of the outcomes of assessments and examinations; these are used to inform target setting which is good practice.
- An oral examination is a component of all school-based examinations, which is very good practice.
- There is regular communication with parents through the use of the school journal and parent-teacher meetings. Reports on student progress are sent to parents three times a year.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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**

**Part A. Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board welcomes the positive report following the Subject Inspection in Spanish and particularly notes the observations regarding the linguistic ability of the staff, the impeccable behaviour of the students, the classroom interactions, collaboration and the Spanish exchange.

**Part B. Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

The recommendations concerning differentiation and AFL will be addressed as part of our School Improvement process in the coming months.

The Modern Languages Department will review its approach to the inclusion of oral activities in all lessons.