

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in Spanish

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Dominican College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Dominican College Sion Hill Cross Avenue Blackrock
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60070K

Date of Inspection: 15-10-2019



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agus Scileanna**
Department of
Education and Skills

SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in Spanish under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	15 October 2019
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and Spanish department	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two hour-long lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and Spanish department

School context

Dominican College Sion Hill is an all-girls voluntary secondary school, under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Schools Trust. It has a current enrolment of 437 students. Spanish was introduced as a curricular subject four years ago and is currently offered up to Transition Year (TY). The first Leaving Certificate cohort will be examined in 2022.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with instances of very good practice.
- While Spanish was used in the lessons observed, English was the main language of communication in the lessons observed.
- Learner experiences were very positive overall, and the school's emphasis on student wellbeing was evident in lessons observed.
- School initiatives to implement the *Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020* were effectively used in the lessons observed to improve learner experiences.
- Subject provision and whole school support for languages is very good.
- Collaborative practices are very well developed in the Spanish department.

Recommendations

- The Spanish department should explore and share strategies for maintaining target language use and should implement these in lessons.
- Teachers should integrate further opportunities for students to talk to each other in Spanish into the fabric of lessons.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall, with instances of very good practice.
- Learner experiences were very positive. Students were able to work both independently and collaboratively in a very purposeful and productive manner. Interactions among students and between students and the teacher were very respectful and positive, and conducive to well-being.
- The teacher, through her own enthusiasm for and enjoyment of Spanish, motivated students to engage in and enjoy their learning. She had high expectations of students' work and behaviour, and communicated these expectations effectively to students. A print-rich environment with colourful posters, maps and displays of student work contributed to the effective learning environment.
- While the teacher used some Spanish in the lessons, English was the main language of communication observed. To improve learner experiences and enable students to experience language learning in an immersive linguistic environment, Spanish should be the main language of communication in lessons. The Spanish department should explore and share strategies for maintaining target language use and should implement these in lessons.
- The majority of interactions between students and the teacher and among students themselves were through English. Students should be encouraged to use the visual prompts on display in the classroom to promote target language use. One student activity required students to use Spanish among themselves. This good practice should be extended, as students require regular practice in conversing and working in Spanish if they are to experience progress and success as language learners. The Spanish department should explore ways of encouraging student interactions using the target language in lessons and should integrate opportunities for students to talk to each other in Spanish into the fabric of lessons.
- A good range of learning tasks and activities suitable for the specific learning intentions of the lessons were designed and prepared in advance. Very good use was made of a memory game, a song about prepositions and other innovative ideas to consolidate learning.
- School initiatives to implement the *Digital Strategy for Schools 2015-2020* were used very effectively in lessons. Students actively used tablets as an aid to learning, and digital activities were integrated very effectively throughout the lessons observed to enhance learning. The teacher made very good use of the school's learning platform to support learning outside the classroom by sharing learning resources with students for use at home. Students used their electronic devices to complete learning and assessment tasks and submitted these digitally.
- In one lesson, grammar was taught out of context and students spent time copying down content from the teacher's presentation. While 'language awareness' is one of the strands in the Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) specification, grammar should be integrated with the 'communicative competence' and 'socio-cultural knowledge and intercultural awareness' strands. This was done very effectively in another lesson, where grammar was taught in a communicative context and different activities had been devised by the teacher to consolidate learning. This good practice should be extended.
- The school's highly effective, comprehensive academic tracking system is used to identify students who may be struggling with Spanish. Teachers, together with the special education teaching department, provide additional support where necessary. The teacher was very

aware of the students in the lessons observed who needed support and activities were differentiated accordingly.

- Effective use of formative assessment strategies was observed in lessons. Feedback from students regarding their learning, using a number line displayed on the wall and in-class digital quizzes, was used effectively to consolidate learning and identify any gaps in learning. Lesson design was flexible and the teacher reacted to students' learning, adapting methodologies as needs emerged.
- The teacher regularly provided students with constructive, developmental oral and written feedback on their work. Where oral feedback is given by teachers, it is suggested that students should be encouraged to write it down and use this feedback as a guide for improving future work.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole school support for languages is very good.
- It is commendable that, in line with *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages In Education 2017-2026*, the school actively promotes access to the study of languages. The current languages students may study include French, German, Spanish and Chinese. Italian is also offered during Transition Year. An example of the school's commitment to languages is the introduction of Spanish as a curricular language in response to emerging student and parental interest. Senior management is aware of possible future language needs of the school and has supported teachers to upskill in other languages such as Chinese.
- The school applied for and received a Spanish assistant for the current school year. The assistant was observed circulating in lessons enabling students to experience Spanish as a living language through interaction with a native speaker. The assistant also has time with smaller groups of students to practice their language skills. Teachers should explore further ways to use this valuable resource to enhance student learning.
- The school has participated in an E-twinning project, where students were encouraged to communicate with students of Spanish in other countries. They were awarded national and European quality labels for their project.
- Spanish teachers have identified and engaged in continuing professional development that develops their own practice, meets the needs of students and the school, and enhances collective practice. This includes participation in the recently commenced peer observation practice aimed at enhancing teaching and learning in the school.
- Spanish teachers recognise the value of linguistic immersion in Spanish-speaking countries in and have undertaken courses in Spain in methodologies for teaching Spanish.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Spanish is one of the language departments in the school's MFL department. Collaborative practices are very well developed in the Spanish and MFL departments. Regular MFL meetings are held with teachers of all MFL languages. In addition, teachers of Spanish meet regularly on a formal and informal basis. Teachers plan collaboratively and use the school's shared learning platform very effectively to collaborate and share resources.
- There was evidence of planning for junior cycle MFL in the planning documentation reviewed. Learning intentions derived from learning outcomes in the MFL strands were observed in lessons. Consideration should be given to planning for the integration of the three MFL strands through the target language in lessons.

- Teachers reflect regularly on teaching and learning and use these reflections to progress departmental practices. The first cohort of students sat the Junior Certificate Spanish examinations this year. Teachers analysed the results and reflected on individual students' achievements, comparing the results attained with their achievements to date. This is very good practice.
- Teachers have developed a comprehensive TY Spanish plan. Currently, the TY plan includes some reference to Leaving Certificate textbooks and prescribed material. As stated in *Transition Year Programmes – Guidelines for Schools*, TY is not part of the Leaving Certificate programme, and therefore the study of Leaving Certificate material should be avoided. The TY plan should be reviewed to ensure that all elements of the programme give students the opportunity to explore Spanish language and Hispanic cultures in innovative and stimulating ways that will enhance the student experience at Leaving Certificate.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;