



An Roinn Oideachais  
Department of Education

# Subject Inspection: Spanish Report

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Conleth's College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	28 Clyde Road Ballsbridge Dublin 4
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60590N
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	16/01/2024
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	15/05/2024

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# What is a 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

## Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.</li><li>2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> or <i>Bí Cineálta (2024)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.</li><li>2. The school's current anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and students.</li></ol>

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

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# Subject inspection

<b>Date of inspection</b>	16/01/2024
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students, including a focus group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and Spanish teachers</li></ul>

## School context

St Conleth's College is a co-educational voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Saint Conleth's Educational Trust. There is a current enrolment of 321 students. The school provides the Junior Cycle programme, the established Leaving Certificate, and a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme. French and Spanish are offered up to Leaving Certificate.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good with elements of exemplary practice in the majority of lessons observed; good practice with some improvement needed was observed in a significant minority of lessons.
- The quality of the teacher's use of the target language was excellent in all lessons; in the majority of lessons, students were provided with opportunities to speak together in Spanish.
- Overall, relationships and interactions in classrooms created and sustained a very positive, co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment.
- In most lessons, students were very engaged and active in their learning; they had a positive image of themselves as confident and capable learners which contributed to their sense of wellbeing.
- Whole-school provision and support for modern foreign languages were very good; it is praiseworthy that students have the option of studying two languages up to leaving certificate.
- Teachers' collaborative practices were highly effective, subject department planning was effective, and the quality of individual planning varied for the lessons observed.

### Recommendations

- The good practice observed, where teachers designed activities for students to speak to each other in Spanish should be extended to all lessons.
- Students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by being required to implement any feedback from teachers in future assignments.
- The school should consider forming a Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) department to further develop teacher collaboration; the MFL department should update planning to reflect the highly effective practices observed in the lessons.

## Detailed findings and recommendations

### 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good with elements of exemplary practice in the majority of lessons observed; good practice with some improvement needed was observed in a significant minority of lessons.
- Classrooms provided an effective learning environment for students and featured prominent displays of student work that showcased Spanish culture and that of Spanish-speaking countries.
- The quality of the teacher's use of the target language was excellent in all lessons. In the majority of lessons, it was clear that students were benefiting from the rich linguistic environment in their writing, comprehension, and spoken production of Spanish.
- In a significant minority of lessons, some students would have benefited from more challenge and opportunities to express themselves in the target language. When interacting with the inspector in these lessons, students understood and were eager to interact with the inspector in the target language. Students in the focus group reported a range of experiences with regard to opportunities to speak Spanish in lessons. Many felt that they were able to speak Spanish regularly to each other while others reported that they would like to be able to speak to each other in Spanish more often. The good practice observed where a range of active methodologies were used to encourage students to speak Spanish in lessons, should be adopted in all lessons.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers modelled enthusiasm and enjoyment in language learning, creating a learning environment where students were self-motivated to engage in and extend their learning.
- Classroom management in all lessons was very good, and students were on task at all times. Student behaviour was exemplary in most of the lessons observed. Students' enjoyment in learning was evident in the very good lessons and arose from a sense of making progress and of achievement. Their engagement with learning contributed to their sense of wellbeing.
- All teachers regularly circulated the room. This was particularly effective when teachers moved from group to group to differentiate tasks and provide extra scaffolding for students with additional educational needs.
- All teachers were very well prepared for their lessons, and the majority of lessons were well sequenced. Some teachers had a clear lesson structure that gave students a clear understanding of what they would be doing in class. This led to students feeling a sense of achievement at the end of the lesson. To further progress this good practice, teachers should introduce intended learning at the start of each lesson. This will enable students to assess their own learning at the end of lessons and will enable teachers to assess whether the intended learning outcomes for the lessons were achieved.
- In the highly effective lessons, students were able to explain what activity they were doing and what they were learning. In the other lessons, while a range of activities and resources was prepared in advance of the lesson, they did not always progress learning. When designing learning activities, teachers should think about how this activity will progress the learning of the lesson.
- When introducing new vocabulary, some teachers focused on pronunciation and at times used choral repetition. Students in the focus group reported that this really helped them with their learning. This effective practice should be extended to all lessons to promote confidence, engagement, and accuracy. In one lesson, new vocabulary was introduced within a communicative context. Students were encouraged to ask and answer questions in pairs to practice the new language structures. This highly effective practice should be extended to all lessons.
- In line with the junior cycle modern foreign languages specification, teachers should develop students' language awareness by encouraging students to take note of similarities and differences in language patterns in Spanish and other languages they know.

- A review of students' copybooks revealed that all teachers provided effective guided comments to students on how to improve their work. Students praised this in the focus group, saying that this helped them understand where they needed to focus to improve their learning. To further this good practice, students should be encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning by being required to implement any teacher feedback in future assignments.

## 2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Whole-school provision and support for modern foreign languages were very good; students have the option of studying two languages up to leaving certificate, which is praiseworthy. The principal reported that a good number of students availed themselves of the opportunity to study two languages each year.
- School initiatives to encourage language learning include an awards system for linguists, where students in each year group are awarded prizes. This was reported by teachers to be very motivating.
- Senior management facilitate teachers to undertake continuing professional development in line with the identified needs of the school. In addition, the school supports teachers financially to join their subject associations.
- Deployment of teachers was highly effective and the timetabling requirements for Spanish were being met by the school. Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings were taking place as appropriate.
- Students' progress in Spanish was tracked and early interventions put in place for any students who might need extra support. This is very good practice.
- The principal, the deputy principal and other leaders in the school created a culture of mutual trust and respect. They fostered a very positive school culture that supported learning and teaching and they encouraged respectful interactions at all levels within the school community.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- Subject department planning was effective overall. Individual planning varied for the lessons observed. Highly effective planning was observed in half of the lessons. This was characterized by activities that were very well chosen to consolidate and progress learning, excellent pace of lessons, and smooth transitions between activities. This practice should be extended.
- Teachers planned extra-curricular activities, such as debating and cinema trips to support the learning of Spanish.
- Planning to support students with additional needs included team teaching, provision of extra support to students and the differentiation of assessments.
- Collaborative practices were highly effective in the department. Teachers met regularly to discuss planning, and minutes were taken at these meetings.
- Teachers used their professional time effectively to plan for junior cycle. Units of learning have been developed in conjunction with the French department. To progress this, teachers should extrapolate from their own individual planning documents, where they have unpacked learning outcomes into weekly class plans, and use these to develop a time-bound scheme of work. As planning is digital in the department, teachers should consider creating hyperlinks to resources within that scheme of work.
- Teachers analysed results from state examinations. This good practice should be furthered by reflecting on these analyses and using those reflections to inform future subject planning.

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 quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Examples of descriptive terms
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective