

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	The High School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Zion Road Rathgar Dublin 6
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60670L

Date of Inspection: 02-12-2016



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 French under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	02-12-2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

The High School is a fee-charging, co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 692 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year programme and the established Leaving Certificate. The study of a modern European language is optional.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed ranged from fair to good, almost all lessons being satisfactory or good.
- French was used consistently as the language of instruction in almost all lessons.
- Teachers used a variety of methodologies, some of which were more successful than others in promoting active student engagement.
- The quality of learning varied in the lessons observed; areas for development include the promotion of more active and spontaneous student interaction in French and extended learning opportunities for the higher-ability students.
- Good assessment practices were noted in a minority of lessons; however, there was scope for development in the provision of both oral and written formative feedback.
- There is good whole-school provision for French and good subject planning for French.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should afford students greater opportunities for both structured and spontaneous interactions in French in every lesson.
- All teachers should differentiate their methodologies and tasks to ensure that students of all abilities are challenged to achieve to their full potential.
- The provision of formative feedback should be further developed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was satisfactory or good in almost all lessons. Instances of very good practice were observed in a number of lessons, while teaching and learning in a small minority of lessons require improvement.
- French was used consistently by the teachers in the majority of lessons observed. Where it was used to a more limited extent, it should be built up incrementally. All classroom instructions should be given in French and, where possible, alternatives to translation used.

- The quality of learning varied in the lessons observed. Areas for whole-school development include the promotion of more active and spontaneous student interaction in French and extending the learning opportunities for higher-ability students.
- Greater student use of the target languages is also recommended. Students generally responded in French to questions asked in French. However, they should also be afforded opportunities in every lesson for more spontaneous use of French, using strategies such as circle time, pair work or general discussion on a variety of issues appropriate to their stage of language learning. The necessary linguistic strategies to support such activities should be given in advance.
- There was good attention to correct pronunciation and spelling in French in some lessons and this practice should be further extended to support both language and literacy development.
- Most teachers communicated the lesson plan to the students in terms of the proposed lesson content. It is recommended that the lesson plan be articulated in terms of what the students should know or be able to do as an outcome of their learning and their capacity to learn. The learning intentions should be revisited during or at the end of the lesson to assess student progress and teachers' management of learning opportunities.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were used to better effect than others. Question-and-answer sessions were observed in all lessons. Good practice was noted in one instance where some of the questions asked necessitated learner reflection.
- Attention to developing the different language skills was observed in most lessons. However in some instances, the better sequencing of activities would have enhanced the benefits of the integrated approach for the students. Teachers should work firstly to develop students' receptive skills of listening and reading for understanding. Students can then be taught how to apply these skills to support their oral and writing skills development. There were some lessons where writing skills development was supported in this way through a preparatory phase where students were reminded of prior learning and skills transferability.
- There were some lessons where a grammar-translation methodology prevailed. This should be addressed through greater use of the target language and the use of an integrated approach.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was observed in most lessons, primarily through the use of digital presentations. Teachers should also consider more creative use of ICT to support and enhance the enjoyment of learning in addition to accessing up-to-date on-line supplementary materials.
- All teachers endeavoured to maintain an appropriate balance between instruction and student activity. Good practice was observed in some lessons where purposeful pair-work activities resulted in active student engagement. In other instances however, the student assignments required greater preparation and clarity of purpose in order to maximise the learning outcomes.
- Students were well behaved and applied themselves to the work in hand. However there was evidence in a number of lessons of the need to further challenge the higher-ability students. Teachers should require these students to give reasons for their answers or to extend them through greater detail of description. Students should also be shown how to create more complex sentences using connective words.
- An examination of copybooks indicated that homework is assigned and examples of very good assessment practices were noted in some of the copybooks examined. The provision of both oral and written formative feedback should be further developed in all lessons. Teachers should also ensure a balance between homework tasks that require content-specific

information and tasks that require the manipulation of language in order to facilitate greater provision of meaningful formative feedback.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school provision and support for the study of modern European languages. While the study of languages is optional at both junior and senior cycle, students can take up a language in Transition Year and continue it into senior cycle. The school also makes students and parents aware of the implications of not studying a language for future career choices.
- Classrooms are teacher based and there were attractive language-learning environments in all of the rooms visited. Charts to support key aspects of revision or examination preparation were displayed in some of the rooms visited. Similar displays should be extended to all rooms as appropriate.
- While individual teachers have undertaken some professional development in recent years, all members of the French department should consider availing of the broad range of scholarships and other professional development events offered to teachers of French for the purpose of linguistic and pedagogical up-skilling.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of subject planning is good. While departmental meetings are primarily organisational in nature, reference to aspects of teaching, learning and assessment is also recorded in the minutes. This good practice should be further extended by including discussion of specific aspects of teaching and learning in all subject planning meetings. Differentiation, for example, could serve as an initial topic for discussion and the sharing of good practice.
- Good work has been completed in the development of collaborative subject plans for each year group. It is recommended that the curricular plans be further broken down to include the methodologies and assessment practices for each tranche of work. While good strategies to promote literacy and numeracy were included in the subject plan they were not evident in many of the lessons observed. This should be addressed.

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.

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 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;