

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Mount Carmel Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kings Inn Street Dublin 1
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60853T

Date of Inspection: 21-10-2016



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.

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.

Subject Inspection: French

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	21-10-2016
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Mount Carmel Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Religious Sisters of Charity and has a current enrolment of 372 female students. The school provides the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school currently participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with some examples of very good practice.
- French was used consistently as the language of instruction; there is, however, scope for development in extending students' use of the target language.
- A range of methodologies to promote active learning was observed; areas for further development include differentiation to meet the diverse needs of the student cohort.
- There is good whole-school provision and support for French.
- Subject planning is progressing well; it would further benefit from more formalised discussion of teaching and learning at planning meetings.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be afforded opportunities in every lesson to build up their use of the target language through both prepared and spontaneous teacher-student and student-student dialogue.
- Teachers should deploy strategies that better support the differentiated nature of the student cohort.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good. There were some examples of very good practice which, if progressed and extended, would further enhance the quality of student learning.

- French was used consistently as the language of instruction in the lessons observed. Efforts to promote spontaneous interactions with students were observed in some lessons. This good practice should be further developed and extended to all lessons through the use of general question-and-answer sessions or inviting comment on a range of unexpected, but authentic topics of conversation.
- To support student interaction in French, students should be given the necessary expressions for asking questions, making requests or expressing opinions in French. Opportunities to consolidate this learning and promoting oral literacy should be facilitated in every lesson.
- Teachers began by communicating the proposed lesson content. It is recommended that teachers reframe these plans in terms of what the students should know by the end of the lesson. These learning intentions should be revisited at the end of the lesson to facilitate the assessment of student progress and to evaluate the lesson management.
- A range of language skills was taught in most lessons. However, further attention should be given to the productive skills of speaking and writing in order to actively promote student communicative confidence and competence. Elements of grammar were taught in context; this is good practice.
- Student progression, building up sentences from words or expressions, was very effectively taught in some lessons. There was also evidence from the copybooks in one lesson of paragraphs being redrafted for the purpose of expanding them. These good practices should be extended to all lessons. All teachers should introduce students to connecting words and demonstrate how sentences can be expanded and made more complex through the use of adjectives, adverbs and relative clauses as appropriate.
- The use of individual or group tasks served to ensure a balance between teacher instruction and student activity. Students engaged well with the tasks assigned. There was one lesson where pair or group work was not facilitated. This should be addressed in order to support oral skills development and independent learning.
- Digital presentations were effectively used to support learning in many lessons. A video-clip of a French song with supporting worksheets was used to promote both language and cultural awareness. However, learning would have been enhanced had the choice of song better responded to the musical tastes of the student cohort. A preparatory phase to set the context and to provide the necessary linguistic support would also have furthered students' learning and enjoyment of the resource.
- While teachers were supportive of students, there was limited evidence of active differentiation in lessons to cater for the mixed-ability nature of the student cohort. Teachers should incorporate into their lessons strategies that provide sufficient challenge for the higher-achieving students and targeted support for those experiencing difficulty.
- There was good attention to literacy in many of the lessons observed through the identification of key words for the lesson and in the use of some tactical teaching initiatives. This good practice should be further developed and extended to all lessons.
- The promotion of learner reflection on work and progress was noted in some lessons. Students in these lessons also tracked their progress in French by keeping a record of achievement in their journals and setting goals for the next phase in their language learning continuum. To maximise this good practice, teachers should provide formative feedback

which can support students in tracking their progress. Students' work can then be redrafted in light of the recommendations given.

- An examination of outcomes in the state examinations indicates good uptake of higher level in the Junior Certificate and results that are appropriate to the student cohort.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school provision in the allocation of time, timetabling and the provision of resources is good. A range of whole-school interventions has been offered over the years to support teachers' continuing professional development (CPD).
- In order to support subject-specific CPD, teachers are encouraged to inform themselves and avail of the range of initiatives provided by the Department of Education and Skills, the French Cultural Services, the subject association and local education centres.
- The recent change to teacher-based classrooms is welcomed in terms of developing a print-rich environment to support language and cultural awareness. Teachers should consider the creation of language-learning posters as a TY project to be completed incrementally over the year.
- Teachers should investigate e-Twinning with a French school for the purpose of promoting inter-cultural dialogue. The school should also consider applying for a French-language assistant.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning was generally satisfactory; however, the teaching and learning improvement agenda should be integrated more into the core of the planning process.
- Formal subject planning meetings are primarily of an organisational nature, while discussion of teaching and learning takes place on an informal basis. It is recommended that discussions of teaching and learning be recorded in order to formally progress the subject improvement agenda and to facilitate the evaluation of progress.
- The documentation submitted indicated that teachers plan individually for their different class groups. A more collaborative approach to lesson planning should be adopted. Furthermore, for ease of reading, it is recommended that the current format used for subject planning be reviewed. Consideration should be given to documenting subject plans in tabular form and extending them to include the different methodologies and strategies to promote literacy and numeracy and differentiation for each year group.
- The TY plan needs to be reviewed to ensure that it is in line with the principles of an effective TY programme. Greater opportunities should be afforded to students for learner autonomy, negotiating aspects of remediation required. Teachers should also consider projects which consolidate learning by putting them into action.
- It is recommended that subject planning also incorporate the range of assessment tools to be used to support student progress. The introduction of an oral assessment for all year groups should become an important assessment component.

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

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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. Overall, learners have access to a basic level of provision. 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;