

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

School name	St. Michael's College
School address	Listowel Co. Kerry
Roll number	61370E

Date of Inspection: 21-03-2019



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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 French 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.

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	21 March 2019
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St Michael's College, Listowel is a voluntary secondary school for boys. It offers the Junior Cycle and the established Leaving Certificate, as well as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school has a current enrolment of 267 boys.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good in the lessons observed.
- There was very effective use of the target language by both teacher and students, with very good practice evident in the focus on oral communication and the use of questioning strategies.
- There was good integration of the key language-learning skills in the well-structured lessons; however, the development of global listening skills at junior cycle level is an area for attention.
- The quality of provision for French is very good, and the timetabling arrangements provide students with regular class contact with the language.
- The quality of planning and preparation is very good, and the high level of engagement by the French department in co-operative practice, professional development, and in planning for modern foreign languages in Junior Cycle is very positive.

Recommendations

- There should be a greater focus on developing the global listening skills of students in junior cycle.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- The use of the target language by the teacher was excellent, and French was used consistently and to optimal effect in all lessons observed. In addition, the presence of a small number of visiting French students created an opportunity for students to engage in authentic conversation.
- The socio-cultural aspect of language learning was addressed by the skilful inclusion of the native speakers in the lessons, and the cultural aspect was expertly developed by the teacher to allow students to compare and contrast their ways of life.
- The approaches to teaching and learning, and in particular the emphasis on oral communication, were appropriate to the students' learning needs and to the time of year. There was a clear progression evident, starting with an initial focus on vocabulary acquisition, and leading smoothly to student engagement in discussion or oral presentation.
- A notable strength of the teaching was the emphasis on promoting the use of questioning strategies by students. While the questioning was initially teacher-led, it quickly moved to being student-led, and this approach promoted a sense of student autonomy.
- Lessons were well structured and attention was paid to the key language-learning skills. With junior cycle groups, as a way of developing the students' listening skills, consideration should be given to reinforcing their global listening skills by allowing them to focus initially on the French text, before completing a listening comprehension exercise where the required answer is in English.
- The teacher-student rapport was very positive. Students were motivated, and demonstrated a willingness to participate in the lesson activities. They were confident in using the target language and in working collaboratively. In order to further develop students' understanding of themselves as language learners, opportunities for them to reflect on their learning should be included in the lesson. This could be achieved by re-visiting the learning intentions and/or the success criteria at the end of the lesson.
- Homework was clearly linked to the lesson topic, and students were well prepared for the assigned tasks. A review of copybooks indicated that homework is monitored and corrected, while the provision of written comments indicated ways for students to improve their work.
- Good support for learning was evident in the language classroom. The room is well equipped and the range of resources, posters, and examples of students' work displayed on the walls make for a stimulating language-learning environment. Very good use is made of the shared-learning platform to store recordings of student work, thus facilitating practice for the classroom based assessments which form an integral part of the new Junior Cycle.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support for modern foreign languages is very good. Both French and German are on offer to Leaving Certificate level. All students are encouraged to study at least one language, and the uptake of French is very strong. In addition, students study both languages during the optional TY programme. The overall time-tabling allocation provides

students in junior and senior cycle with regular contact with the language throughout the week.

- French language and culture are actively promoted in a variety of ways, including engagement with the foreign language assistant scheme; a school tour to Paris; and a variety of co-curricular activities such as French films, songs, and food, and the celebration of European Day of Languages.
- Senior management is very supportive of teacher professional development, and the teacher has recently availed of professional development provided by the support services.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is very good, and includes a comprehensive subject department plan. The plans are time-bound, and are linked with the language portfolio at junior cycle. They reflect a good awareness of the Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) specification, including the importance of a cross-curricular approach. Work is also ongoing with the German department on the compilation of a modern foreign languages plan. This is very positive as it reflects the goals outlined in *Languages Connect-Ireland's strategy for foreign languages in education*.
- As French is a single-teacher department, it is very positive that an MFL department has been established in the school to support collaborative planning, and that the teachers meet on a weekly basis. Very good collaboration is also evident with the French department of another local school, as well as ongoing teacher participation in the regional cluster group for languages.
- There was evidence of very good planning for individual lessons with resources and appropriate strategies prepared in advance.
- An analysis of levels of student uptake and attainment in the certificate examinations is undertaken each year, and the results are used to inform subject planning and the tracking of student progress.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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;