

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in German

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Meánscoil Iognáid Ris
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Naas Co Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61710C

Date of Inspection: 19-09-2016



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 **German** 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

Date of inspection	19-09-2016
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 4 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Meánscoil Iognáid Rís is an all-boys post primary school located in Naas, Co Kildare. It operates under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust and offers a very wide curriculum that includes an optional Transition Year Programme. German is optional for all students and is one of three modern languages on offer in the school. The enrolment is growing steadily and at the time of the inspection 1,000 students were enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good and teacher use of the target language was excellent.
- In line with good practice, teachers presented students with many opportunities to practise the skills of language acquisition in an integrated manner.
- Student engagement was good in all lessons and students completed tasks assigned to them with enthusiasm.
- School management has established excellent structures to ensure high standards in the quality of teaching and learning are maintained and whole-school support for German is exemplary.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- When focusing on the development of the skill of listening in lessons teachers should use more pre- and post-listening activities.
- In order to develop the assessment practices currently in use, teachers should gain a comprehensive understanding of the principles of assessment for learning (AfL) and use the strategies associated with AfL more frequently in the classroom.
- Teachers should provide clear written formative feedback in students' copybooks and students should be required to understand and correct errors they have made as follow up to teacher correction.
- The subject department plan should be developed to include a focus on the intended student learning outcomes relating to the skills of language acquisition, in addition the AfL methodologies that are used in lessons should be documented in the plan.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was good with many examples of very good practice. Teacher knowledge of the curriculum was good and teachers demonstrated good pedagogical skills.
- Teacher use of the target language was excellent. German was used extensively in the course of lessons and students demonstrated good comprehension.
- Students' use of the target language was good. However, teachers need to give students more opportunities to speak in German during lessons. To maximise student use of the target language more opportunities for student-student interaction should be created.
- In line with best practice teachers presented the learners with very good opportunities to practise the skills of language acquisition. Students were given opportunities to listen for understanding, to read, write and speak German. This approach to the integration of these key skills served well to consolidate student learning.
- In the development of the skill of listening, students were provided with a variety of comprehension tasks. However, teachers need to provide more pre- and post-listening exercises to enhance the development of this vital skill. In the post-listening phase, students should be given the opportunity to hear the original material again and to identify where they have made errors.
- Good pedagogical practices were observed in the course of visits to lessons. Brainstorming techniques were used to good effect and in one lesson the use of authentic visual materials enhanced student learning. Overall there is a need for the development of more active learning methodologies to enhance student learning.
- In line with the requirements of the syllabus, lesson content was theme based. In a senior cycle lesson, the content was very much enhanced through the use of authentic audio visual material from a German news channel.
- Student engagement was good in all lessons and students completed tasks with enthusiasm. In some lessons in junior cycle, elements of fun were introduced through games and it was clear that students were really enjoying their learning.
- Good inclusive practices were noted in the context of team teaching in a senior cycle lesson and some students received extra support as the need arose. Approaches to team teaching could be developed by looking at the different models that are possible and by trying out new approaches where there is a more even distribution of input by both teachers.
- Good assessment practices were noted throughout lessons. In some lessons when questions were posed, teachers supported students' attempts to answer by giving hints or asking further questions. This scaffolding provided by teachers enabled students to think through their answers and ultimately led to greater student success.
- Some use of peer and self assessment was evident in the course of lessons. However, this is an area for development. In line with the principles of AfL, teachers should make greater use of strategies such as think, pair, share, integrating resources such as show me boards and traffic lights to enhance student learning. In the correction of student written work teachers

should give more formative feedback and ensure that students follow up to a greater extent on errors they have made.

- Classroom management was very good at all times and student behaviour was exemplary. It was evident that students felt at ease and teachers were very encouraging of learners' efforts thus leading to a most positive classroom atmosphere.
- The school's literacy policy was transacted very well at classroom level. Students were encouraged to use dictionaries, to increase their vocabulary through the use of synonyms and also through using the "phrase of the day".

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The current school senior management and leadership team has just expanded to include a second deputy principal. Very good support for German was evident at management level and the subject is well provided for in the school.
- The structure which has been put in place which affords subject departments the opportunity to present a written report on the achievements of their department to the school's board of management is an example of outstanding practice.
- Timetabling arrangements are very good. Students receive the appropriate amount of tuition time in German and lessons are well distributed throughout the week. Good co-curricular activities are provided by teachers to students such as trips to Germany, and opportunities to participate in German debating competitions.
- Senior management places great emphasis on improving and developing teaching and learning in the school and has put in place a very good subject department structure. The duties of the subject co-ordinator are clearly delineated and carried out very well.
- The subject department is well resourced and this year the school has availed of the Department of Education and Skills foreign language assistant scheme which provides the school with a native speaker to assist in the teaching of German.
- Teachers have availed of whole-school continuing professional development (CPD) in relation to a number of pertinent generic areas relating to teaching and learning. Teachers would benefit from availing of CPD relating specifically to second language acquisition to develop their existing practice.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING

- The subject department structure is working very well and teachers collaborate effectively. Minutes of meetings are kept and the report prepared for the board provided evidence of the very good work done by the team of teachers throughout the year.
- The subject department plan is good and outlines the content of the curriculum to be delivered in all years. To build on this good practice teachers should develop the plan to include a focus on intended learning outcomes for students in terms of the skills of language acquisition. The plan should also document how greater use will be made of AfL both in classroom practice and in the correction of written work.
- Teachers' individual planning for lessons was good and all materials and resources that were necessary for the lessons were prepared in advance. To enhance the planning for lessons, an increased focus on student learning outcomes and pre- and post-task work is suggested.

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

The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of management welcomes the report and has commended the teachers of German on the hugely positive observations within the report. It welcomes especially the commendations in relation to the following:

1. Quality of teaching and learning was good and use of the target language was excellent.
2. Teachers presented students with many opportunities to practise the skills of language acquisition in an integrated manner.
3. Student engagement was good and they completed tasks assigned to them with enthusiasm.
4. School management has established excellent structures to ensure high standards in the quality of teaching and learning are maintained and whole-school support for German is exemplary.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Board of Management has requested that the teachers of German consider the recommendations as part of their subject planning. The following are recommended.

- Improve the use of pre and post listening activities
- Improve the use of AfL in the classroom
- Develop written formative feedback in students' copybooks
- Subject Department plan should be developed to include focus on the intended student learning outcomes relating to the skills of language acquisition

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 very good 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;