

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Hamilton High School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Bandon Co Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	620500

Date of Inspection: 10-10-2018



An Roinn Oideachais
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 of the school 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.

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

Dates of inspection	09-10-2018 and 10-10-2018
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Hamilton High School is a privately-owned, voluntary secondary school for boys. The patron is the owner of the school, and a board of management is in place. The school has a current enrolment of 375 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, and a compulsory Transition Year programme, as well as the established Leaving Certificate programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good in the lessons observed. There were some examples of very good practice while there was scope for development in other instances.
- There was very effective use of the target language for instruction and communication purposes in many lessons, although some unnecessary translation into English was evident at other times.
- Very good practice was noted with regard to the sharing of learning intentions with students, and the promotion of active student engagement; however there was scope for development with regard to the clear identification of learning intentions and the development of students' language skills.
- The rapport between students and teachers was very positive, and the level of engagement and co-operation was very high.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for French is very good, and there is a wide range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities provided to support students' language learning.
- The overall quality of subject department planning for French is very good, while planning for the new Junior Cycle should include an ongoing review of its implementation by the teachers.

Recommendations

- The teaching of the relevant French phrases for classroom communication to students should be planned for and introduced on an incremental basis from first year, so as to reduce the need for translation into English.
- There should be a more focussed use of learning intentions and a greater use of assessment for learning (AfL) strategies in lessons, as well as a focus on the teaching of the relevant language skills in order to ensure a positive learning experience for students.
- The subject teachers should engage in ongoing collaborative planning for units of work in first year and second year, as well as the eventual review of these units, in order to further support the implementation of the Modern Foreign Languages specification.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good in the lessons observed. There were some examples of very good practice while there was scope for development in other instances.
- The rapport between students and teachers was very good and students benefitted from the positive classroom environment. Students were co-operative and interested, and their level of engagement was very good. Their work and efforts were monitored and supported by the teachers.
- Very effective practice was noted where French was used consistently for communication and instruction purposes by teacher and students. However, in some lessons, there was a tendency to provide an automatic translation into English even though the students' level of understanding was good. This practice, whether in the translation of classroom instructions, or in providing a translation without checking whether one was warranted, should be avoided, as it does not challenge students to make use of their language-learning skills. Teaching students the French phrases necessary for communication in the classroom should be planned for and introduced on an incremental basis from first year.
- While the learning intentions for the lesson were generally shared with students, they were sometimes listed as topics to be covered, rather than expressed as learning intentions. Greater use of Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies, and more specifically the more focussed use of learning intentions, would facilitate the identification of the key learning points of the lesson for students, and would improve the quality of student learning in some lessons. Revisiting the learning intentions at the end of the lesson would allow students to engage in reflection and self-assessment of their progress, and would promote independent learning.
- The approaches to teaching varied, with very good practice evident where lessons were constructed around a theme, which was then explored in different ways. Where there was scope for development in some lessons, there should be a re-evaluation of how examination material is used within the lesson context for assessment of learning. Students should first be supported in developing the language skills relevant to their stage of learning, and classroom assessment should be used to progress their learning. A focus on teaching skills such as global listening skills, would lead to improved learning outcomes for students.
- Where language learning was most successful, there was a very good focus on the use of active learning methodologies that enabled students to work together in a purposeful manner. The assigned tasks were clearly explained and promoted meaningful student activity.
- Attention was paid to the development of language awareness in a number of lessons. This represents very good practice, especially in the context of the Junior Cycle specification for modern foreign languages, as it encourages students to recognise language patterns and to become confident learners.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used effectively to support teaching and learning in most lessons. Video clips illustrating the theme of the lessons were well chosen, and provided a starting point for discussion and student activity, as well as for developing their cultural awareness.

- Questioning strategies were used effectively in many lessons to facilitate student engagement, and the strategies included opportunities for students to question each other. At times, there was an overemphasis on teacher-directed questioning, and this had an impact on students' ownership of their learning. Alternative ways of facilitating conversation through pair and group work should be explored, in order to ensure a better balance between teacher input and student contributions.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for French is very good.
- French is one of two modern European languages offered to Leaving Certificate level in the school. All students study a language as a core component of their course. The uptake of French is very good.
- Co-curricular and extra-curricular support for the subject is extensive, and includes in-school events as well as opportunities for cultural activities and visits to France.
- There is good leadership of learning in the school. The senior management team is engaged in promoting good practice in teaching and learning through the focus on "think, pair, share" as part of the most recent phase of the school's self-evaluation process (SSE).
- The classrooms are mostly teacher based, and the print-rich environment that has been developed in some classrooms, helps to enhance the learning experience for students. However, as the school is housed in a listed building, the small size and the layout of the classrooms do not readily facilitate the management of group work.
- There is good access to continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for staff, in particular in relation to the introduction of the new Junior Cycle specification. It is positive that teachers have availed of these opportunities, and that some members of staff have attended additional courses relevant to language pedagogy and to their own linguistic upskilling, both in Ireland and in France. As a further support for their work, the language teachers should consider availing of the range of scholarships and professional development days offered by the French Cultural Service and the Department of Education and Skills.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of subject planning for French is very good.
- Subject department meetings are held regularly, good minutes are recorded, and a subject co-ordinator is in place.
- There is an appropriate focus on the preparation of yearly schemes of work and resources, as well as on planning for the new specification for Junior Cycle. It is very positive that recent planning has included the preparation of a document on Wellbeing and language learning. Collaborative planning for units of work in first and second year, as well as the ongoing review of these units, is recommended as a way of further supporting the implementation of the Modern Foreign Languages specification.
- Where very good practice in individual lesson planning was observed, there was a focus on the learning outcomes for students. Planning for language lessons should include the integration of key skills, as well as the use of assessment practices that will promote both language learning and skills development for students.

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

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 of Hamilton High School is pleased with the very positive findings in the subject inspection report.

The Board of Management of Hamilton High School is very happy with this report which recognises that the overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment of French is of a good standard.

The Board is equally happy that the report recognises 'the rapport between students and teachers (is) very positive and the level of engagement and cooperation (is) very high'.

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 French Department will introduce the relevant French phrases for class room communication on an incremental basis from first year.

To ensure a positive learning experience for students, teachers will continue to implement more focused assessment for Learning Strategies (AFL) in lessons and use more focused learning intentions.

The French department will engage in continuous collaborative planning for units of work in first and second year and review accordingly to ensure the implementation of the Modern Foreign Languages specification.