

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Patrick's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Gardiner's Hill Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	62730N

Date of Inspection: 11-04-2019



**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 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

Dates of inspection	10 and 11-04-2019
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Patrick's College is an all-girls voluntary secondary school which operates under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Cork and Ross. It has a current enrolment of 253 students and it participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. It offers the Junior Cycle Programme, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching in lessons observed was good with some very good practice also evident.
- Good quality learner outcomes were attained in the lessons observed and student performance at the level for which they have been entered in certificate examinations is commendable; this is supported by teacher commitment and experience.
- Currently, formal assessment of student oral competence is confined to senior cycle.
- Provision for French and whole-school support for the subject is generally very good with clear scope, however, to re-consider class organisation.
- The quality of departmental and individual teacher planning was generally good with scope to improve planning for teaching, learning and assessment using the new Junior Cycle specification identified.

Recommendations

- Over time, assessment practice should evolve to include the assessment of student oral competence as part of normal assessment practice at all levels.
- Due consideration should now be given to the creation of mixed-ability groups at junior cycle.
- Planning for teaching, learning and assessment should evolve to ensure that the opportunities for the development of practice offered by the Junior Cycle Specification for Modern Foreign Languages are fully exploited.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching in lessons observed was good overall with some very good practice also evident.
- Lessons had been well planned and prepared and were linked to previous and intended learning. Good quality planning for lessons supported effective time management. Planning had included attention to the integration of skills and, where relevant, examination requirements. The clear identification of linguistic learning outcomes for lessons was advised as was an approach to listening comprehension designed to enhance the development of listening skills. Very good practice was identified where lesson preparation had included planning for the use of authentic resources; this is an aspect of practice which merits extension.
- In the main, lessons were conducted in the target language with limited recourse to translation. The inclusion of some pair and group work was designed to facilitate student oral interaction. The clear identification of linguistic learning outcomes, previously referenced, the inclusion of oral starts to lessons and greater use of cooperative learning strategies would ensure an appropriate balance of teacher and student talk. The acquisition and reinforcement of specific linguistic structures should also ensure that student oral interaction and production is as natural as possible and not dependent on the written word. Whole-class collaborative composition would also support written production which draws on student oral production.
- Students displayed good recall of learning and good grammatical awareness. There were some very good examples of the scaffolding and reinforcement of learning supported by teacher encouragement and affirmation. Best quality student engagement was evident where there was a clear quality of established teacher-student rapport and where student interest and enjoyment was enhanced by an appropriate integration of both teacher and student use of information and communications technology (ICT). Such use also allowed a commendable extension of independent learning opportunities beyond the classroom by the provision of a link.
- Written work is assigned; an examination of some student work provided some examples of good written feedback. The use of the portfolio in Junior Cycle now provides opportunities for greater use of self and peer assessment.
- To date, formal assessment of student oral competence has been confined to senior cycle. It is advised that, over time, this becomes part of normal practice at all levels.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, the quality of provision for French and of whole-school support for the subject is very good.
- French is a key part of the curriculum as it is the only modern foreign language offered in the school. Given *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026* and the aim of greater diversification of language provision in schools, there may perhaps be an opportunity to introduce another language in a programme such as TY.
- Time allocation to the subject is very satisfactory. Although teachers are not classroom based, efforts have been made to create colourful and linguistically supportive language learning environments. Whilst recognising the physical constraints in the facilities, some thought should be given to how best to enhance this practice so as support the development of cultural awareness and resource-building.

- Traditionally, classes have been streamed from second year. In the light of evidence of levels of uptake of higher level, and given the common nature of the Junior Cycle Specification for Modern Foreign Languages, due consideration should be given to the creation of mixed ability groups.
- The French department is commended for its tradition of applying for the services of a French language assistant. This has also led to a fruitful link with a school in Cherbourg. In addition, French teachers have availed of the scholarship to France scheme. All such opportunities to support ongoing teacher professional development are to be recommended.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of departmental and individual teacher planning was generally good with scope to improve planning for teaching, learning and assessment using the new Junior Cycle specification identified.
- French teachers work collaboratively in cooperation with a coordinator; the position of coordinator rotates annually. Department meetings are held and records are retained.
- Teachers have created a subject folder, a subject plan and schemes of work. The subject folder now includes a statistical analysis of student performance in certificate examinations. In order to maximise the value of such statistics, it is advised that the related departmental discussion be recorded in order to identify how classroom practice might evolve to support any possible improvement in performance.
- The TY plan would be enhanced by the addition of an element of annual teacher and student evaluation of the programme.
- The French department as a whole should take time to study the *Junior Cycle subject* specification and to identify the key implications therein for the development of classroom practice. Schemes of work for units of learning should be developed incrementally in the light of the specification and planning advice available.

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;