

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

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Meán Scoil An Chlochair
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilbeggan Co. Westmeath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63221U

Date of Inspection: 16-01-2019



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.

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	15 and 16 January 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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Meánscoil an Chlochair is a co-educational post-primary school in Kilbeggan, Co. Westmeath and operates under the trusteeship of Catholic Education An Irish Schools Trust. It offers the junior cycle, an optional Transition Year programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme to its 571 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with aspects of very good practice also observed in lessons.
- All teachers spoke French consistently and to a very good standard; there is scope to increase student-student interactions in the language.
- Students were on task at all times and a clear structure was evident in lesson planning and delivery; there is further potential to review the use of learning intentions as a planning and assessment tool within lessons.
- Very good formative assessment strategies featured through oral feedback, questioning and self-assessment; written formative feedback on student work was less readily observed.
- The quality of provision and whole-school support for French is very good.
- The quality of individual planning and preparation is very good.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide further opportunities for students to develop their oral skills in French through a greater emphasis on student-student interactions in the target language.
- Learning intentions should be explicitly outlined to students, formulated so as to encourage progress in a variety of language skills, and learning should be reviewed at the end of lessons.
- Teachers should develop the provision of written formative feedback on student work.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, with aspects of very good practice also observed in lessons.
- Teachers spoke French consistently, and to a very good standard, in all of the lessons observed. Translation to English was avoided and this ensured that students could fully benefit from immersion in the target language.
- Students generally interacted with teachers in French and their pronunciation was, in most instances, corrected where necessary.
- Opportunities to further student-student oral skills development in the target language featured in half of the lessons observed. Spontaneous opportunities for oral skills development should feature more regularly within lessons and such tasks should be placed, where possible, at various junctures within the lesson structure.
- Active learning opportunities were observed in every lesson, mostly to good effect, such as through a number of creative group work activities and the use of songs to revise key verbs.
- The attention paid to the development of all language skills varied within the lesson observations. Best practice observed included a lesson where numerous skills were carefully woven into an over-arching theme. In this lesson, students also had the opportunity to extend their learning when requested to identify pertinent aspects of grammar within the reading comprehension task. Overall, as with oral skills development, and particularly within the context of one hour lesson schedules, there is scope to develop and extend this approach to include as wide a variety of skills treatment within all lessons.
- Teachers presented the intended learning at the start of most lessons. In the best examples, the students were presented with challenging and specific learning intentions that could later be used to assess and review the learning. Overall, however, further development is required to ensure that the learning intentions are sufficiently detailed and challenging for students, with due attention to the various language skills. Time should also be allocated to review learning towards the end of lessons.
- Some very good formative assessment strategies were observed. These included teacher provision of oral formative feedback to students and evidence of student self-assessment identified in copybooks. Furthermore, a recent student survey, undertaken amongst examination year groups by a teacher, analysed and reviewed existing formative assessment practices.
- A sample review of copybooks indicated that students receive regular homework assignments and that such work is monitored by teachers. While some examples of teacher comments on homework corrections were observed, such instances were limited overall. It is therefore recommended that teachers find opportunities within students' written work to further identify and note strengths and areas for improvement.
- Very good questioning was observed, including references to develop students' socio-cultural awareness, as well as spontaneous and extended strategies that served to deepen student learning.

- Students receive regular formal assessment and an appropriate system of reporting on students' progress to parents is in place. An in-house oral assessment is also in place for most year groups and these practices should be extended to third and TY year groups, where, at present, oral examinations do not form part of the assessment portfolio.
- The promotion of student skills in literacy and numeracy development featured through referencing the uses of dates in French and topic-specific vocabulary was also noted on the board.
- Teacher-student rapport was noted to be very positive in all lessons and students were on task at all times.
- The classrooms were visually appealing and print-rich, with various expressions and relevant materials prominently displayed. Classroom seating arrangements were optimal, in all instances, for the promotion of an active learning environment.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for French is very good.
- There is an appropriate allocation of time, and the spread of lessons across the week is mostly very good.
- Uptake of languages is good at junior cycle in the school and the continuation rate from junior to senior cycle has improved, with the majority of students opting to continue their studies in their chosen language.
- A short taster programme, recently introduced for first-year students, has served to enhance student choice and promote the language options available within the school. In this regard, the initiative whereby TY students teach French to local primary school pupils also represents a very good opportunity to promote uptake for the subject.
- Teachers organise a variety of additional activities to support student engagement and promote the language, including a recent language and adventure trip, pen-pal exchanges and an annual visit from a French school. An application in recent years for the services of a foreign language assistant was successful and served to further engage students in their learning.
- Teachers have attended a range of continuing professional development opportunities; this is to be commended.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of individual and collaborative planning and preparation was very good.
- Schemes of work outline the content to be covered for each year group. Going forward, the review that has taken place in planning for the implementation of the specification for modern foreign languages at junior cycle, could usefully be extended to the existing schemes for other year groups, particularly in terms of the possibilities to align more specific methodologies to the themes in question.

- Very good evidence was provided to indicate that a detailed review of outcomes in certificate examinations takes place annually within the subject department. Furthermore, useful strategies have been identified that could assist with bolstering student performance. To build on the work completed to date, and to ensure that the strategies identified can be measured for their effectiveness, it is suggested that these strategies are refined through the development of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets.
- Very detailed minutes of subject department meetings are retained and contain evidence of agendas relating to organisational matters and to teaching and learning issues. This is very good practice.
- The position of subject co-ordinator is regularly rotated and, in order to enhance collaboration in line with the new junior cycle specification, the language options within the school have recently amalgamated into a single modern foreign languages department. This is good practice.

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 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.

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 of 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;