

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

**Subject Inspection in French**

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	John Scottus Secondary School
<b>School address</b>	72/76 Morehampton Rd Donnybrook Dublin 4
<b>Roll number</b>	68071G

**Date of Inspection: 14-12-2016**



**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 French 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

<b>Date of inspection</b>	14-12-2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

John Scottus Secondary School is a co-educational, fee-charging, post-primary school with a current enrolment of 129 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), and the established Leaving Certificate.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching was effective with a number of highly effective practices noted in some lessons.
- The quality of learning ranged from fair to very good.
- French was consistently used by the teachers in the lessons observed and there was some good student engagement with the language observed, although further opportunities for such engagement existed.
- A range of effective methodologies was observed and an appropriate balance was maintained in most lessons between teacher instruction and active student participation.
- There is good-whole school support for French with some teachers engaging in CPD to support teaching and learning.
- There was evidence of good planning and preparation by individual teachers.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Opportunities should be afforded in all lessons for spontaneous student interaction in French with their teachers and peers.
- Teachers should ensure that their methodologies and proposed tasks facilitate the differentiation required to meet the needs and abilities of all students.
- Teachers should maintain ongoing engagement with continuing professional development events for the purpose of linguistic and pedagogical up-skilling.
- Teachers should adopt a more collaborative approach to future subject planning and share good practice in regard to teaching, learning and assessment practices.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Competent teaching was observed in all lessons with examples of highly effective practices noted in some. The quality of learning, however, varied from fair to very good in accordance with students' willingness and ability to purposefully engage with the lesson.
- There was very good preparation for all the lessons observed. Lesson aims were communicated in all instances. It is recommended that these learning intentions be framed in terms of what the students should know by the end of the lesson. These learning intentions should be revisited to assess student progress and to reflect on lesson management.
- French was used as the language of instruction in all of the lessons observed. There was one lesson where students were actively encouraged to interact in French beyond the level of rote learning. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons as appropriate. Translation was used to support comprehension in another lesson. Teachers should seek alternative methods to translation for the purpose of scaffolding students' learning.
- To support general classroom interaction in French, students should be given the necessary classroom language to ask questions, make requests and express difficulties. These linguistic tools should be progressed incrementally from first year. Given the small number of students in some class groups, teachers could consider the use of circle time for the purpose of student discussion in French with the teacher and with their peers.
- A range of methodologies was observed, many of which were creative and used to good effect. Digital presentations were effectively used in some lessons to provide visual supports for the presentation of new material; in others they served as stimuli to progress learning. In one lesson where a good choice of video clip was used, learning could have been further enhanced with the introduction of a preparatory phase to support comprehension of the digital text and to contribute to the follow-on activities.
- Very good practice was observed in one lesson where posters downloaded from a digital presentation served as a stimulus for students to write up their personal responses to the topic on post-its and to display them. While simple in format the strategy was very effective in obliging students to react spontaneously in French.
- Vocabulary sheets were made available to students in one lesson for the purpose of supporting their diverse linguistic needs. It is recommended that student tasks also be differentiated to ensure that all students are challenged to their full potential.
- In some lessons where reading texts were used, students were asked to read in turn. In such instances it is preferable that students understand the text in order to be able to read it aloud for pronunciation purposes.
- There was a good balance between instruction and student activity, primarily through the use of pair-work tasks. There was one lesson however, where a number of students did not engage purposefully with the activity. This should be addressed in terms of the management of group work.
- The quality of learning varied. In lessons where students applied themselves to their work their questions and responses indicated good evidence of active student engagement and learning.

- A weekly presentation by students on a given topic, as observed in one lesson, promoted both oral skills development and independent learning. To maximise the benefits of this good practice, consideration should be given to affording the student's peers the opportunity to ask questions about or comment on the presentations.
- A positive learning environment was promoted in all lessons and most students engaged well with the work, their teacher and their peers. There was one lesson however, where a number of students were inattentive and talkative despite the teacher's efforts to create an active and enjoyable language learning experience. These behaviours limited the language learning opportunities in the lesson and should be addressed.
- An examination of students' copybooks provided evidence of homework assignments, corrections and, in some instances, formative feedback. The practice of providing students with written formative feedback should be further developed.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- There is good whole school provision and support for French in the allocation of time and the provision of resources.
- Classrooms are student-based thereby limiting the opportunity to create a rich language-learning environment. While some French-related posters were evident in classrooms, the creation of a French corner in the school should be considered for the purposes of promoting language and cultural awareness.
- Some teachers have engaged in a range of continuing professional development events to support teaching and learning. This good practice should be extended to all for the purpose of ongoing linguistic and pedagogical up-skilling. Teachers should also consider accessing the range of language learning resources available on-line.
- The school should discuss applying for a language assistant or they should engage in projects such as e-twinning for the purpose of promoting intercultural dialogue.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The overall quality of subject planning is good. However, it is recommended that teachers work more collaboratively when developing curricular plans in order to ensure consistency of approach and to share the workload. The individual plans submitted on the day of the inspection were well developed and reflected careful planning and preparation for lessons.
- To further the good practices evidenced in subject planning documentation, teachers should engage in greater discussion of teaching and learning, identifying strengths and areas for improvement. A collaborative approach on how to best manage differentiation would be of particular relevance given the mixed-ability nature of all class groupings.
- The TY plan which includes modules on film studies, the creation of a magazine and the creation of a theatrical sketch indicates good commitment to the principles of an effective TY programme. A module to support language remediation where the topics for revision could be negotiated by the students should also be considered.

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

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.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

We welcome the report and the comments on the observations about the use of highly effective practices, the consistent use of French, the appropriate balance between teacher instruction and student participation and the good preparation and planning by teachers.

It is part of our school ethos to continually enquire into how to provide the best learning and teaching environment to our students, and we embrace the recommendations in the report to guide this enquiry.

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

As of part of our learning and teaching strategy we at John Scottus continually endeavour to refine and improve the standard of learning and teaching through collaborative professional dialogue and planning, the development of learning communities, coaching pairs, peer observations, student surveys and educational workshops.

In this context we will be taking into special consideration the recommendations in the report to support greater student interaction through constructive group work, to support the need of all students through differentiation, and to support continuous upskilling through professional development events.

## 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;