

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Lucan Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Esker Drive Lucan Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70080T

Date of Inspection: 23-01-2018



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. 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	22-01-2018 and 23-01-2018
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Lucan Community College is a co-educational post-primary school with an enrolment of 902 students. The school offers the junior cycle, a compulsory Transition Year Programme, the Leaving Certificate (Established), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and the Leaving Certificate Applied.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- French was the language of the classroom and there was a good variety of opportunities for students to practise their language skills in every lesson.
- Commendably, the assessment portfolio within the school includes oral assessments for all year groups as well as the optional junior certificate oral examination; there is scope to increase the provision of written formative assessment on student work.
- Teachers are enthusiastic and reflective practitioners, committed to the subject, and have engaged in a variety of continuing professional development (CPD).
- The quality of provision and whole-school support for French is exemplary.
- The quality of individual planning and preparation was very good; collaborative planning and preparation requires improvement.

Recommendations

- Increased use of formative comments on students' written work is advised in order to guide students towards further improvement.
- Current schemes of work should be developed into effective working documents, as outlined in the main body of the report.
- Planning for continued improvement in student attainment should take place through the development of specific, measurable, attainable, realistic and time-bound (SMART) targets.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to very good.
- French was consistently spoken by all teachers and there was generally a good balance between teacher and student input in lessons.
- Students had the opportunity to use the target language in every lesson through a variety of well-planned and spontaneous activities both with their teacher and with each other. Very good attention to both teacher and student pronunciation was also observed in most lessons.
- Teachers outlined specific learning intentions at the start of all lessons and good plenaries were observed, affording teachers the opportunity to monitor student learning at various intervals within the lesson structure. This included a 'thumbs up - thumbs down' approach where the level of difficulty of the material covered could be assessed at the conclusion of lessons. To build on this good practice, more time should be allocated towards the end of lessons in order to thoroughly assess student learning and to review the specific learning intentions.
- Each lesson was meticulously planned in advance and an integrated and thematic approach was evident. Tasks provided were sequential in nature and allowed for appropriate scaffolding of the learning experiences.
- Active learning strategies featured prominently through pair and group work. It was evident that students were motivated by these learning opportunities.
- Information and communications technology was used to deliver lesson content through digital presentations, appealing visuals and video clips. This served to enhance the learning experience for students.
- Many effective examples of teaching approaches that avoided the use of translation were noted. This allowed for maximum teacher and student engagement with the target language. Examples observed included the use of mime, jumbled sentences and synonyms to denote meaning. Such good practices should be extended, where possible.
- Assessment for Learning (AfL) strategies were regularly noted and effective practice included the use of 'show-me-boards' and 'traffic light' techniques. While there were also some good examples of students being guided towards improvement through teachers' written formative feedback in student copybooks, there was scope for further development in the provision of such comments.
- Homework was regularly assigned and monitored. Formal assessment of students takes place regularly and there is an appropriate system of reporting on students' progress to parents. Commendably, an in-house oral assessment for all year groups is in place and the subject department has also introduced the optional Junior Certificate oral examination.
- Teacher questions were varied and distributed amongst the student cohort. 'Randomiser sticks' were employed in two lessons to direct questioning towards a wide range of students. Other good examples included rapid-fire revision questioning at the start of lessons to recap on prior learning. Teachers also circulated, providing individual support where necessary, in order to further differentiate learning.

- Classroom management was excellent, with students on task and well behaved in all of the lessons observed. A very good teacher-student rapport was also in evidence in every lesson observed.
- Current seating arrangements are mostly optimal for the promotion of a student-centred learning environment. Print-rich elements were noted in each classroom and this aspect could be extended, where appropriate, in order to further encourage student use of the target language.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for French is exemplary.
- Timetabling arrangements are highly commendable with a generous allocation of time and an appropriate spread of lessons across the week to ensure regular contact time for all year groups.
- Teachers of French actively promote the subject through a variety of methods, including regular trips to French-speaking countries, cinema trips and 'café français' lunchtime language lessons. In order to build and extend student exposure to the culture and language of the French-speaking world, students also recently benefitted from the deployment of a French language assistant.
- Teachers have engaged in a commendable variety of CPD, the benefits of which were evident in the engaging lessons observed.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of individual planning and preparation was very good; collaborative planning and preparation requires improvement.
- Teachers have developed a significant database of online resources and planning materials, including areas of reflection on current practice. These documents are detailed and regularly reviewed. The overall subject department policy would, however, be more user-friendly if it were collated into a single, comprehensive and sequential document that could be reviewed annually.
- Existing schemes of work provide information regarding the overall themes to be covered and, in addition, material is presented within a time-bound context. This is good practice. However, as the content of the schemes is generic and relies on the chapters of the textbooks, the documents lack sufficient detail to allow them to serve as effective working documents. This should be reviewed as a priority for the department, to include learning outcomes, methodologies, and methods of assessment that are specific to each theme.
- It is positive to note the increasing uptake of higher-level French in the certificate examinations at both junior and senior cycle over recent years. The teachers of French should now consider an analysis and review of available data to inform planning for continued improvement of attainment through the development of targets that are SMART.

- The subject co-ordinator has volunteered for the role over a number of years. In line with best practice, it is now timely that this voluntary position be rotated more regularly in order to build professional capacity within the department.
- Subject department meetings are minuted and contain evidence of agendas relating to organisational matters and to a range of teaching and learning issues. This is very good practice.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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 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.

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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Lucan Community College welcomes the French Subject Inspection report. It acknowledges the positive findings of the report, in particular, the high quality of teaching and learning observed, the consistently strong use of the target language, the use of oral assessments, the enthusiasm, hard work and reflective professionalism of teachers, the excellent classroom management and very good teacher-student rapport evident in all classes.

The Board also notes that the French Department engage in professional development opportunities and that the school support for timetabling of this subject is highly commendable.

The Board commends the French Department and students for their ongoing work and engagement with the subject and for their ongoing support and involvement in events and co-curricular activities especially the TY French trip, cinema trips, café français, visits from a French theatre group and use of a French language assistant.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

1. The French Department will discuss and devise a plan to increase the use of formative comments on students' written work.
2. Work has already started on improving the departmental schemes of work by making the content more specific in terms of learning outcomes, methodologies and methods of assessment for each theme.
3. The French Department have committed to defining a specific improvement for their subject each year (e.g. this year's aim was to encourage students to risk incorrect responses and accept that mistakes are part of learning process) and to review progress each year. While the French team are delighted that the Inspection report commends a trend of increasing uptake of higher level French in state exams, it will consider student attainment as a focus in future years in an effort to further improve student attainment and will endeavour to set targets that are SMART.
4. The French team will continue to seek opportunities to engage in continuing professional development and have already begun to make contact with other schools who have demonstrated successful practice and innovation as reported in their published subject inspection reports.
5. The French team will continue to collaborate with the German team under the umbrella of Modern Foreign Languages to share best practice and learn from each other.