

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Aireagail
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballyhale Co. Kilkenny
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	70570N

Date of Inspection: 12-03-2020



**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.

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

Date of inspection	12-03-2020
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 three lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil Aireagail is a co-educational secondary school under the auspices of the Carlow Kilkenny Education and Training board (ETB). The school provides the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action planning for improvement.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching was satisfactory with a number of effective elements that resulted in good learning overall by students.
- The target language was used as the language of instruction in all of the lessons observed; students would benefit from more opportunities to engage in unprepared conversations in French with the teacher or their peers.
- The range of methodologies used supported general learning; the use of the textbook as the sole resource limited opportunities for rich socio-cultural learning and for challenging the higher-ability students.
- Senior management is supportive of the French Department; however there is very low uptake of the subject at senior cycle and teachers have not accessed subject specific continuing professional development (CPD) in recent years.
- Good work is currently underway to support more meaningful subject planning; there is scope for development in subject planning for junior cycle.

Recommendations

- Students should be afforded opportunities in every lesson to interact spontaneously in French with the teacher or their peers.
- Teachers should make greater use of supplementary texts, audio and video clips and digital technologies to further challenge students and to extend and enhance learning for all.
- Teachers should engage in subject specific CPD for the purpose of linguistic and pedagogical upskilling and should use the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) website and planning templates to inform their planning for Junior Cycle.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Competent teaching was observed in all lessons; there is, however, considerable scope to enrich the students' learning experience and outcomes through the use of a broader range of resources and by maximising the potential of student tasks.
- The target language was used consistently by the teachers in all of the lessons observed. There were, however, insufficient opportunities for students to interact in terms of general conversation. In addition to the role-plays or prepared conversations observed in lessons, students should be actively encouraged to interact spontaneously in French with either the teacher or their peers in all lessons.
- The proposed lesson content was communicated to students in some instances, while in other lessons the plan was shared as series of learning intentions. All lesson plans should be articulated in terms of learning intentions; that is what the students should know or be able to do by the end of the lesson. Success criteria should also be communicated to the students and the learning intentions should be revisited at punctuated intervals or at the end of the lesson to assess progress.
- A range of methodologies was observed. Question and answer sessions were used in all lessons and student responses indicated good evidence of learning. Students' linguistic capacity could be further developed through the use of more open questions requiring extended and higher-order language usage appropriate to students' age and stage of learning.
- Pair work was observed in all lessons. There were some tasks which had good potential to extend student learning, but were not exploited to full advantage for all. The use of differentiated materials and tasks to support the diverse abilities of students is encouraged. Greater attention to time management for group work was recommended in one instance.
- The textbook and its accompanying workbook were the sole resources used in all of the lessons observed. To further engage students and to better integrate the curricular strand of social and cultural awareness contained in the new junior cycle specification for French, the use of supplementary materials, worksheets, songs, video and audio clips along with digital technologies is recommended. This would complement the material contained in the textbook and should enhance students' work and enjoyment of lessons.
- A positive and respectful learning environment prevailed throughout. The classrooms visited had displays of French-related posters and some charts of classroom language. These displays could be further enhanced with charts of key expressions for the week or the topic and more examples of student work.
- The quality of learning was good. Students participated well in lessons, answering the questions asked of them and completing the tasks assigned. Learner participation in some lessons indicated that a number of students were capable of further challenge, while others needed greater modelling of task requirements to achieve the desired outcomes.
- Some students made oral presentations on the group tasks completed. This is good practice. To further enhance this good practice, a general pronunciation drill to should be considered in advance to support students' confidence and competence in delivering their presentations.
- Good assessment practices were observed. Evidence from a sample of students' work indicated that homework is assigned and corrected with helpful comments included to support improvement. To build on this good work, teachers should seek ways to encourage

students to take on more responsibility for their progress through processes such as redrafting or highlighting the areas for improvement and how they have been addressed in subsequent assignments.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The study of French in Scoil Aireagail is compulsory at junior cycle. However, as an optional subject in senior cycle, the uptake of French is very low. As leaders of learning, the senior management team along with the French Department should endeavour to raise the profile of modern foreign languages in line with the targets contained in *Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017 – 2026*.
- The current allocation of time and timetabling is supportive of the subject. The change in the current academic year from a grouped fifth and sixth year class for senior cycle French to discrete class groups is welcomed and should benefit students in both year groups.
- Senior management indicated that it is supportive of teachers engaging in CPD. This is welcomed as it is recommended that the members of the French department access CPD for the purpose of both linguistic and pedagogical upskilling; a range of courses and scholarships are available both in Ireland and in France for this purpose.
- The school should apply annually for a French language assistant to promote and support the teaching and learning of the language and increasing student interest and motivation to learn. Consideration could also be given to introducing student exchanges or home-based initiatives such as E-twinning for the purpose of promoting inter-cultural dialogue.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Considerable work has been carried out to support planning for the teaching and learning of French. To further this good work teachers should include greater discussion of pedagogical aspects of teaching and learning such as how best to meet the challenges of the new junior cycle specification, accessing and sharing resources and discussion of creative and effective methodologies in their subject planning meetings.
- Good practice was noted where the members of the French Department have engaged in discussing the Looking at our School (LAOS) framework. Having discussed the statements of good practice and how they might be identified, teachers should now move to the next stage of ascertaining and acquiring the evidence needed to inform them of their learners' experience and outcomes in lessons.
- While learning plans have been developed for the new Junior Cycle programme, they are not sufficiently aligned with best practice as promoted by JCT. It is recommended that teachers access the planning templates available on the JCT website to guide them in their future planning.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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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 board accepts the contents of the report and will take appropriate measures to address the recommendations therein. Senior management will collaborate with the subject department to ensure agreed objectives are being achieved. These objectives will include; the enhanced provision of opportunities for the spontaneous use of French between teachers and peers, the increased use of supplementary materials and media to enrich the learning environment and increased engagement with CPD by teachers.

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;