

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

School name	Clonakilty Community College
School address	Clonakilty Co Cork
Roll number	70950A

Date of Inspection: 04-12-2019



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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	3, 4 December 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 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Clonakilty Community College is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 594 students. The school is under the auspices of Cork Education and Training Board (CETB). It offers the full range of curricular programmes, including a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was consistently good in the lessons observed, with very good practice observed in a number of areas.
- Very high quality practice was observed in many lessons where French was widely used by teachers and students for instruction and communication purposes; some scope for development was evident at other times.
- Higher-order questioning was used successfully to challenge students in their learning; however, there was scope for the use of more varied questioning strategies in a small number of instances.
- The rapport between students and teachers was very positive, and the level of student engagement and motivation was very high.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for French is very good, and is demonstrated by the range of co-curricular activities provided for students, and by the teachers' interest in developing their own practice.
- The overall quality of individual and collaborative planning was very good, including regular teacher meetings, and a focus on assessment planning and practices linked to the Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages specification.

Recommendations

- All students should be encouraged and supported in using French for communication purposes during lessons.
- A move away from teacher-directed questioning to the use of more varied questioning strategies is suggested in order to ensure that all students are involved and supported in their learning.
- Given the good practice already evident in teaching and learning, teachers should look to further enhance the learning experience for students through greater use of authentic resources.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was consistently good, with some very good practice observed in a number of areas.
- The use of French as the language of instruction and communication by teachers was evident in many lessons. Very effective practice was observed where established classroom routines were carried out in the target language. It was positive to note how many students were at ease in using the language. This good practice should be extended to all lessons, and students should be encouraged and supported in using the language for communication purposes.
- In a number of lessons, planning was used very effectively to incorporate a series of inputs and activities arising from the learning intention, thus leading to the achievement of the learning outcomes. Students were encouraged to take ownership of their learning and there were some good examples observed of students engaged in reflection on their progress as well as on ways to improve their work.
- Where very high quality practice was observed, there was a very good balance between teacher talk and student input. In these lessons, students benefitted from a variety of individual and collaborative tasks, and there was a clear focus on building students' spoken language and confidence through the use of scaffolded tasks. This integrated approach ensured that students remained engaged and motivated for the duration of a double lesson.
- The use of higher-order questioning challenged students to extend their ability to express themselves both orally and in written form. There was a good level of purposeful engagement by students, and their progress was monitored effectively by the teacher with assistance offered as required.
- In a small number of instances, there was an over-reliance on teacher-directed questioning to named individuals. As a result, the opportunities afforded to some students to contribute during the lesson were limited. A more integrated approach to teaching and learning, as well as the use of more varied questioning techniques, would ensure that all students are fully involved and supported in their engagement with the chosen activity.
- The textbook was generally used to good effect to support student learning. As many students showed a very good level of subject knowledge as well as a high level of motivation, ways of enriching their learning experience through the use of authentic resources such as video clips or news items, should be considered.
- There was good attention paid to vocabulary development and grammar awareness, in particular with regard to answering questions on comprehension texts, whether written or aural. Where listening material is used for the purpose of answering comprehension questions in English, consideration should be given to strengthening students' global listening skills through an initial focus on the French text, before progressing to answering exam-type questions.
- The monitoring of students' work by the teachers was generally very good, with comments and suggestions included in homework copies. Students were co-operative and motivated and the rapport with teachers was positive and respectful.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support for French is very good. It is currently the only language offered to senior-cycle level. All students in first year study French before selecting their options at the end of the school year. The language is included on more than one of the option bands which allows for very good access to the subject. The percentage of students taking the subject in both junior and senior cycle is very positive.
- While the allocation of time for language classes in junior cycle is fully in line with the requirements of the specification for modern foreign languages (MFL), the provision of double periods reduces the frequency with which students have contact with the language. The number of class periods may also vary in any given year according to the option band selected. It is very positive to note the ongoing subject teacher discussion on how best to incorporate these factors into their practice.
- French language and culture are very positively promoted throughout the school in a variety of ways, including a cinema trip, French breakfast, carol service, and the celebration of French Week. Good practice is evident in the colourful displays of posters and language-related material in the teachers' classrooms, especially since a number of temporary classrooms are currently in use.
- The teachers of French have engaged in a wide range of continuing professional development opportunities, including conferences organised by their subject organisation, by Post Primary Languages Ireland (PPLI), and by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST).

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of individual and collaborative planning was very good.
- A comprehensive subject plan for French is maintained on the school server, and the plan is updated regularly to reflect the current changes in the Modern Foreign Languages specification and in assessment procedures. Of particular note is the section devoted to cross-curricular links with other subject areas, as well as the subject department's links with the school's literacy and numeracy strategies.
- The teachers of French meet regularly to plan for their subject, and are also involved in the development of the whole-school assessment policy. The benefit of these meetings is evident in the very good level of collaborative planning that has gone into discussion of the different classroom-based assessments (CBAs) for Junior Cycle, and on how best to prepare students for the different elements involved.
- Very good leadership of the assessment process is demonstrated by the preparation of a calendar for French, outlining the dates of in-house tests, reports and Junior Cycle CBAs, thus allowing for forward planning and helping to ensure that the assessment process is manageable for both staff and students.
- An analysis of levels of student uptake and attainment in the certificate examinations is undertaken each year, and the results are used to inform planning and the tracking of student progress, as well as related areas such as homework procedures, and study and revision skills. 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 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;