

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Maria Immaculata Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Dunmanway Co. Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76086P

Date of Inspection: 10-05-2018



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.

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	09-05-18 and 10-05-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Maria Immaculata Community College is a mixed post primary school under the joint trusteeship of Cork Education and Training Board (CETB) and the Diocese of Cork and Ross. The school has a current enrolment of 496 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Established (LCE) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching in lessons observed was effective with some very good practice and some instances where some scope for development was identified.
- Good quality learning experiences are enabled by experienced and supportive teachers in encouraging classroom environments.
- Currently, formal assessment of student oral competence is limited to senior cycle.
- Whole-school support is of a very good quality with scope to use departmental collaboration to enhance subject provision.
- Planning for teaching, learning and assessment requires improvement and development.

Recommendations

- Over time, assessment practice should evolve to include the assessment of student oral competence as part of normal assessment practice.
- The French department should devise a time-bound action plan for the incremental development of subject provision
- Planning for teaching, learning and assessment should evolve to reflect the requirements of and opportunities offered by the Junior Cycle Specification for Modern Foreign Languages and to encompass more than just a listing of subject content for both TY and senior cycle.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment was good with some aspects of practice observed being very good and some demonstrating scope for development.
- In examination years, lesson content had been selected with an appropriate level of examination awareness and an appropriate focus on consolidation and revision. Some reflection on how the focus of lesson content might need adaptation in the context of the outcomes based approach of the Junior Cycle Specification for Modern Foreign Languages is merited. The importance of the initial teaching and acquisition of linguistic structures should always be kept in mind. One of the lessons observed, provided a very good example of the use of oral activity to support the acquisition and practice of linguistic structures. Some consideration should be given as to how to differentiate lesson content to further challenge students.
- In the main, lessons were conducted in the target language. In the most successful lessons, content was exploited with a clear focus on the creation of opportunities for student oral production and with an appropriate balance of teacher and student talk. To this end, it was suggested that lessons commence with some natural oral interaction, that every effort be made avoid being 'text bound' or overly dependent on the written word and that junior cycle lessons include much oral interaction and oral production from the start.
- Lesson pace was best where a variety of activities was included and where there was no undue emphasis on translation or on student writing of answers on the board.
- There was some inclusion of teacher use of information and communications technology (ICT). An opportunity exists to explore how ICT might be used to a greater extent and, how for example, it would further support the development of cultural awareness and extend learning opportunities beyond the classroom.
- Learning was generally well supported. The quality of teacher-student rapport was generally very good. Students are encouraged to establish good organisational habits from the start. Work is assigned and monitored. Students demonstrated good recall and a very good level of language awareness is being developed. Student note-making as opposed to student note-taking should also be encouraged so as to support greater independent learning.
- Assessment of student oral competence is confined to senior cycle. Over time, this should become an integral part of language assessment in all years.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support is very effective whilst subject provision is effective with some scope for development.
- Currently, French is offered as part of all programmes and all students are encouraged to take the subject. Time allocation is very satisfactory. In the main, teachers are classroom based and there were some very good examples of very colourful and linguistically supportive language learning environments.
- Currently, junior cycle classes are organised in mixed-ability groups in first and second year and are streamed in third year. The common nature of the Junior Cycle Specification for Modern Foreign Languages may provide an opportunity to reconsider the organisation of third-year classes.

- The French department has a complement of five teachers. Some are members of the professional association and have attended the national conference or a professional course in France. Very positively, a number have certificate examination experience. Ongoing involvement in continuing professional development opportunities which support the maintenance of teacher linguistic competence is recommended as a support to teachers.
- It is positive that the school has access to the assistance of personnel from the European Voluntary Service (EVS) as part of the School Completion Programme (SCP). It is also very good that the school had the services of French language assistant in the school year 2016-2017.
- There is scope for the French department to consider how it might develop extracurricular and co-curricular support for students of French in the school. In the first instance, this could perhaps take the form of an e-twinning or an e-link.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Overall, the quality of planning was good. Whilst planning and preparation for lessons was generally very good, it was clear that subject plans required considerable reflection and development.
- Planning for lessons observed demonstrated a clear awareness of examination requirements and a focus on support for revision and reinforcement, as appropriate at the time of year. Lesson preparation had also taken cognisance of the need to focus on the various language skills.
- Teacher collaboration is supported by a departmental structure. The position of coordinator rotates. Teachers meet both formally and informally and records are maintained.
- Subject plans are, as yet, very basic being largely confined to a listing of content to be covered. Plans for all levels should evolve. Plans for junior cycle should develop incrementally in line with the requirements of the Junior Cycle Specification for Modern Languages. In particular, these plans should adopt the learning outcomes based approach fundamental to the specification. The TY plan should reflect the expansive nature of the programme and should document the aims and objectives of the course, content, teaching strategies to be used, resources, assessment and evaluation. Plans for senior cycle classes could be documented on a thematic basis including for example reference to learning outcomes, linguistic and grammatical content, teaching strategies, differentiation, resources, assessment and evaluation.
- It is also advised that the French department devise a time-bound action plan for the incremental development of general subject provision. All of the planning developments advised should stem from departmental reflection and discussion. It is considered that the French department has both the interest and capacity to respond to these suggestions.

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 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;