

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

**Subject Inspection in French**

**REPORT**

<b>School name</b>	Newpark Comprehensive School
<b>School address</b>	Newtown Park Avenue Blackrock Co Dublin
<b>Roll number</b>	81001I

**Date of Inspection: 06-12-2016**



### **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.

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.

## Subject Inspection

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	5 and 6 December 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 nine class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Newpark Comprehensive School is a co-educational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 851 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school has a European section supported by the French Government, the Department of Education and Skills and the board of management, where students can study French more intensively.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- Teaching was generally effective in the lessons observed and, in most instances, afforded good opportunity for active learning.
- French was used as the language of instruction in all lessons observed; however, in a small minority of lessons it was overly scaffolded by translation.
- A range of methodologies was observed; some were both creative and effective, while others resulted in more limited learning outcomes for students.
- Some of the methodologies and activities observed were not sufficiently challenging for the highly-competent students in the European Section.
- There is good whole-school provision and support for French.
- A number of very good subject-planning processes are in place.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater opportunities for student interactions in French should be a key component of every lesson.
- An integrated approach, with due attention to all of the language skills, should be used for all lessons including those focussed on revision.
- Teachers, particularly those involved in the European section, should ensure that their methodologies and assignments challenge all students to their full potential.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching was generally effective in the lessons observed. Examples of highly effective practice were noted in some instances. Where teaching was less effective, the areas for development included greater use of the integrated approach.
- French was used consistently by the teachers in all lessons observed. Where its use was scaffolded with translation, teachers should consider alternative approaches to support students' comprehension. Students should also be given the necessary classroom expressions for expressing difficulty, asking questions or making requests.
- Spontaneous student interaction in French was facilitated at the beginning of one lesson where the teacher asked general questions about their weekend. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons and the topics for discussion differentiated accordingly. Opportunities for both prepared and spontaneous student interactions in French should be incorporated into every lesson.
- Most lessons began with the establishment of learning intentions. In some instances students filled in a template indicating what they knew about the lesson topic at the beginning and end of the lesson. This very good practice, which supported student assessment for and of learning, should be extended and should also inform the teacher's assessment of student progress.
- A range of language skills was taught in many lessons. However, in a small minority of instances, there was a misplaced focus on teaching vocabulary in isolation. This should be addressed through the use of a more integrated approach where appropriate listening or reading texts set vocabulary into context and where students use this learning to support oral and writing skills development.
- Revision was the focus of some lessons. Good practice was noted where the teacher provided a quick overview of the topics followed by a series of student tasks to consolidate prior learning. In other lessons, the revision was limited to a review of vocabulary using translation as a methodology. It is recommended that the integrated approach also be adopted for revision and students reminded of the transferability of learning across the different language skills.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in most lessons, supporting learning through the use of digital presentations, and on-line resources. Where lessons took place in the computer room, a good balance was maintained between whole-class interventions and students' use of computers. Furthermore, some of the student ICT tasks supported independent learning and resourcefulness in addition to achieving the intended learning outcome of cultural awareness. The use of software programmes to assess and consolidate learning was observed in another lesson. In this instance, learning could be further enhanced by asking students to give reasons for their answers.
- Active learning was effectively promoted in a TY lesson where students had to prepare a lesson to be taught to their peers. To make this a more meaningful learning experience students should be afforded the opportunity to deliver the lesson to an appropriate cohort.
- All teachers endeavoured to maintain an appropriate balance between instruction and student activity through the use of individual student tasks or pair work. Pair or group work specifically for oral skills development should be a component of every lesson.

- Very good correction of homework and formative assessment practices were observed in some of the copybooks examined. This is an area for development in a number of lessons.
- Team teaching was observed to very good effect in one lesson where students in the European section study Home Economics through the medium of French. The approach involved the teaching of French by one teacher, while the other intervened with pertinent questions in French of relevance to Home Economics.
- There was evidence in some lessons within the European section that students with high linguistic proficiency were insufficiently challenged in terms of the learning opportunities afforded to them. Greater use of differentiated resources and tasks is recommended to ensure that all students are challenged to reach their full potential. More opportunities for spontaneous student interactions in French, particularly on subjects of topical interest and requiring students to express opinions are also recommended.

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

- There is good whole-school provision and support for French in the allocation of time, timetabling and the provision of resources.
- Classrooms are predominantly teacher-based and grouped in the same area of the school. This practice supports professional dialogue between teachers of French. The classrooms visited were decorated with posters of cultural interest and some classroom language. Further displays should be developed as the year progresses.
- Some members of the French department have attended a range of continuing professional development (CPD) events and this is welcomed. All teachers are encouraged to consider the CPD opportunities available for the purpose of linguistic and pedagogical up-skilling.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject department planning is undertaken as a collaborative endeavour and is well organised and progressive. The subject plan for French is very comprehensive and considerable work has been completed in developing curricular plans. Work is currently being undertaken to store these plans and the teachers' library of resources electronically.
- The school's current focus on assessment as part of school self-evaluation (SSE) is reflected in the subject plan for French. The analysis of results is also part of subject planning practice. To maximise the benefits of these good practices, planning meetings should include more active discussion on aspects of teaching and learning, homework and assessment that will in turn support improved outcomes for learners.
- The introduction of a modular approach to the delivery of French in TY is welcomed as a means of supporting better curricular provision for students.
- The creation of workbooks to support the content and language integrated learning (CLIL) approach to teaching Home Economics within the European section is very good practice. A similar type workbook should be considered for French for TY students.

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

The Board of Management and the French Department welcome the inspections findings. In particular the Board notes that teaching was generally effective, with examples of highly effective practice noted in some instances.

The Board and French Department have noted the recommendations made and have begun the process of implementing the recommendations and will review the progress made in the coming year.

## **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 French Department have agreed as a department to extend the practice of allowing a few moments for spontaneous student interaction in the target language to all classes on a daily basis at the beginning of each class. They have found that this not only allows the student to see the link between the learning of the language and its authentic use in daily interaction, but also starts the class on a pleasant, collaborative note. They will explore further strategies how to maximise the use of the target language generally in the classroom, look at how to implement these strategies to support their students in increased use of the target language in the classroom and plan for progression in the use of the target language both by themselves and their students.

With respect to the “integrated approach”, they have started a file within the French Department Document Share point on line. Materials are being gathered under topics of senior and junior cycle, to incorporate snippets of reading, listening, oral extracts and small written tasks, taken from newspapers, internet and other authentic sources so that teachers can build up a bank of “integrated” materials which we can dip into in class.

The school have also been in touch with the Post Primary Languages Initiative and hope to hold a seminar in our school under their auspices for all language teachers, German, French and Irish, next September which will have particular emphasis on the “integrated approach”.

In September 2016, following on from a school self-evaluation process a School Improvement Plan has been put in place by staff in the European Section. As part of this process particular attention will now be placed on measures to stretch the more advanced students. This will be done by incorporating tailor-made resources and authentic texts in addition to DELF examinations. CLIL training has been undertaken since the inspection and feedback will be given to the French, German and Irish departments.

## 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;