

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in German

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Holy Family Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilteel Road Rathcoole Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91301D

Date of Inspection: 04-04-2017



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 German 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	04-04-2017
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Holy Family Community School is a co-educational post-primary school with an enrolment of 894 students. German is offered as an optional subject to incoming first-year students and the uptake is satisfactory. The Transition Year (TY) programme is optional. German is offered in all the curricular programmes in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good and a wide range of highly effective teaching methodologies was used throughout.
- The use of strategies associated with Assessment for Learning (AfL) is particularly commendable.
- The quality of student learning was very good and meaningful student engagement was evident in lessons.
- Student-teacher rapport was excellent and the base classroom for German provides a highly appropriate learning environment for students.
- Whole-school support for German is good and the principal has shown very good instructional leadership moving from banded class groups to mixed-ability settings.
- The quality of subject department planning is very good and is characterised by effective collaborative practices.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers need to place a greater focus on the development of oral skills in junior cycle by using dedicated pronunciation exercises and creating more opportunities for student-student interaction.
- Students should be provided with more opportunities to engage in listening comprehension tasks in junior cycle.
- In order to share the very good pedagogical practices evident, teachers should engage in peer lesson visits.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The quality of teaching was very good with a number of excellent practices evident in the course of visits to lessons.
- Teacher use of the target language ranged from excellent to good. Teachers used visual images to introduce and reinforce new vocabulary in order to avoid translation. In a small

minority of instances some grammatical and linguistic errors were made by teachers. In order to avoid this teachers need to review materials a little more carefully in advance of lessons.

- A number of excellent methodologies were used in all lessons. Strategies such as group work, pair work and role play were used to good effect. The use of strategies associated with AfL, such as exit slips, success criteria, check lists, peer and self-assessment was highly effective.
- The quality of student learning was very good. Students engaged purposefully in meaningful activities in lessons. Students availed of good opportunities to work independently and collaboratively and teacher circulation ensured that students received individual and collective support where necessary.
- In the lessons observed, a strong focus on integrating the skills of language acquisition was evident. Scope remained to maximise the development of students' orals skills in German by using dedicated pronunciation exercises and by increasing the opportunities for students to interact with one another in German. It is recommended that students receive very regular feedback on errors in spoken production and be given ample opportunities to repeat the correct pronunciation.
- In junior cycle lessons there was less emphasis on the use of listening comprehension activities than might be optimal. There is a need to use audio materials with texts spoken by native speakers in lessons more frequently. This will serve to provide a rich linguistic input for the learners.
- The quality of assessment is very good. A sample of copybooks was reviewed and provided evidence of ongoing monitoring and formative feedback to students by teachers. In-class assessment could be enhanced by the use of show me boards and by teachers providing increased global and individual feedback on student errors.
- Classroom atmosphere was very positive in all lessons and teachers praised and encouraged students for their efforts. Student-teacher rapport was excellent and it was evident that all teachers are very committed to achieving the best learning outcomes for their students.
- The base class room for German provides students with a highly effective learning environment. A wide variety of student work was on display as well as posters with AfL tips, maps, grammar charts and photographs. The high quality of these materials serves well to support high quality student learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support for German is good and management has allocated appropriate resources in terms of personnel. Timetabling is effective and students have regular contact with the language. Access to the subject is good as German is offered to all students in first year.
- The senior management team has led a significant change by moving from a banding system to a mixed-ability grouping system for all students. The principal has provided very effective leadership for learning in this context by ensuring the staff were facilitated to avail of appropriate continuing professional development (CPD).
- The teachers of German have shown excellent commitment to CPD and are implementing many new strategies on an ongoing basis to enhance teaching and learning. All teachers demonstrated very high levels of engagement in co-professional dialogue. Their openness to innovation and eagerness for CPD is exemplary.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject planning for German is very good. Collaborative planning is facilitated by senior management and there was clear evidence of high quality collaboration between members of the subject department in planning for the delivery of German in the curriculum.
- Schemes of work were well prepared and teachers used them well to inform classroom practice. Individual lessons were well planned and a wide range of materials was prepared in advance for the learners.
- Subject department meetings take place on a formal and informal basis and minutes are kept of formal meetings. Review is part of planning and the German department analyses student attainment in the certificate examinations. To extend this good reflective practice it is recommended that attainment trends over a number of years be analysed and targets, particularly for potentially higher achievers, be set.
- In order to facilitate the sharing of the very good practice evident in the course of the evaluation, teachers should engage in peer visits to each other's lessons. This will provide a rich form of internal CPD and effective opportunities to engage in professional dialogue.

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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 welcomes the very positive German inspection report. The Board is pleased with the strengths and commendable practices identified. The Board is examining the recommendations with a view to their implementation.

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

The Board will support the German Department plans to place a greater focus on the development of oral skills and the provision of more opportunities to engage in listening comprehension tasks in Junior Cycle. The German teachers are exploring the possibility of peer lesson visits.

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
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 very good 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;