

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

**Subject Inspection in French**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Phobailscoil Iosolde
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Palmerstown Dublin 20
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	91302F

**Date of Inspection: 14-05-2019**



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**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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	13 & 14 May 2019
<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 four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Pobalscoil Iosolde is a co-educational post-primary school. All curricular programmes, including a compulsory Transition Year (TY), are offered to its 738 students. The school takes part in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to satisfactory.
- Teachers spoke French throughout most of the lessons; opportunities for students to engage in the target language were noted in half of the lessons observed.
- Strategies supportive of formative assessment and differentiation featured in a number of lessons; formative written feedback was not evident in student copybooks.
- The quality of provision and whole-school support for French is very good; there is scope to further promote the subject.
- The quality of individual planning was good; some areas for improvement exist in relation to certain collaborative schemes of work.

#### Recommendations

- Further opportunities for students to speak in French with each other should feature in all lessons, and oral examinations should be extended to all year groups.
- More regular written formative feedback on student work should be provided by teachers.
- Opportunities to promote the subject should be further explored by teachers, particularly through the development of links with schools in French-speaking countries.
- Schemes of work for TY and sixth-year should be updated, to ensure that all planning documentation functions as effective working documents.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed ranged from good to satisfactory.
- Teachers spoke in the target language throughout most lesson observations and students readily understood instruction provided in the target language.
- Students' oral use of French was noted with their teacher and, in half of the lessons observed, with each other. Such opportunities for students to speak French in pair and group work tasks should be extended to all lessons in order to develop students' productive skills in the language.
- Teaching approaches to the correction of student pronunciation involved whole-class drills. As a follow-up to such work, it is advised that teachers also provide more individual attention to student errors in pronunciation.
- Ample opportunities for active learning featured in most lessons. In some instances, there was scope to place a greater emphasis on the development of a more student-centred learning environment at an earlier stage in the lesson juncture, in order to maintain momentum within the lesson.
- Teachers presented the learning intentions at the start of all lessons. This good practice would be enhanced through the provision of greater detail and explanation of the proposed content; as well as ensuring that adequate time is allotted at the end of the lesson to provide for a plenary to review and assess the learning.
- Very good strategies to promote differentiation featured in a number of lessons. Examples observed included a homework assignment that had been differentiated into 'mild, medium and spicy' and spontaneous questions to reinforce learning covered in previous lessons.
- A sample inspection of copybooks indicated that homework was being assigned, however, no examples of written formative feedback were identified. Teachers' should address this by working to develop written comments that can identify strengths and guide students towards improvement.
- More generally, formative assessment strategies observed included the use of 'show-me-boards' and 'traffic lights'. 'Lollypop sticks' were also used to distribute questions amongst the student cohort. These approaches served to reinforce the learning to good effect.
- Regular formal assessment of students takes place and parents are kept informed regarding student progress in the subject. An in-house oral assessment is in place for all senior cycle students; this should be extended to all year groups.
- In a lesson, students' sociocultural awareness of French culture was encouraged through the theme of World War II and D-Day in France; this is good practice.
- Good strategies to promote literacy and numeracy featured through referencing the uses of dates in French and topic-specific vocabulary was also noted on the board.
- Classroom management was noted to be good overall.

- The classrooms were print-rich, with various posters, expressions and relevant materials prominently displayed. Best practice in classroom seating arrangements were observed where the seating had been arranged in a manner favourable for the creation of the best conditions for a student-centred learning environment. Where possible, extending such arrangements should be considered.

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

- The quality of provision and whole-school support for French is very good.
- Within the context of a school operating hour-long lessons, the allocation of time and the spread of lessons across the week is very good and students have regular contact time with the subject.
- Both the uptake of languages on entry to the school, and the continuation rate from junior to senior cycle, is excellent. The most recent data available indicated that all students continue their studies in the chosen language from junior to senior cycle. This is also very supportive of current national goals, as outlined in *Languages Connect: Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education*, to increase uptake of the study of modern foreign languages in Ireland.
- Current practice within the school is to implement banding in the subject after first-year. In light of the introduction of the common-level specification for modern foreign languages, and findings from recent educational research, it is advised that this practice be reviewed in favour of mixed-ability class groupings.
- Staff have engaged in a variety of relevant post-graduate level continuing professional development opportunities available within the university sector; this is commendable.
- Teachers have begun to promote the subject through online platforms to inform students of the importance of language learning for careers. Further opportunities should be considered, such as e-Twinning and an application for a foreign language assistant, in order to deepen student engagement with the language and culture of French-speaking countries.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of individual planning was good; some areas for improvement exist in relation to certain collaborative schemes of work.
- Work has begun within the subject department to implement the 2017 modern foreign languages specification; the teachers plan to further develop and review the relevant schemes of work in the near future.
- The overall quality of existing schemes of work varied; those pertaining to third and fifth-year were very detailed and it would be useful to extend this template to the TY and sixth-year documents so that they can function as effective working documents. In particular, emphasis should be placed on the time-bound nature of delivery and, for the TY plan, a more dynamic learning experience should be developed for students.

- Data relating to outcomes within the certificate examinations indicated some improving trends over recent years. There is further scope, however, to increase the uptake of the higher level papers and to develop strategies to reduce the high failure rate within the ordinary level papers. Commendably, the members of the subject department also acknowledge these areas of concern and have developed strategies based on target-setting in order to address these issues.
- A review of available minutes of subject department meetings indicated evidence of agendas relating to organisational matters and to teaching and learning issues. This is good practice.
- The position of co-ordinator is voluntary and, where possible, more regular rotation is advised in order to build leadership capacity within the subject department.

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 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.

## 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 of 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;

# **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 of Pobalscoil Iosolde would like to acknowledge the role of the subject inspection process as a valuable component in our commitment to excellence and ongoing evaluation and is pleased to note the following:

- The overall quality of teaching was of a good to satisfactory standard.
- The board is also pleased to note that teachers spoke in the target language throughout most lessons and students were provided with opportunities to speak French with the teacher and, in some lessons, with each other.
- The board is pleased that it was observed there was an emphasis on active learning.
- The board is very pleased that it was noted there was an emphasis placed on differentiation in a number of lessons and very good strategies in place for same.
- It is further pleased that it was noted there was a variety of questioning techniques and strategies in place for formative assessment.
- The board is heartened that it was found the continuation rate from junior to senior cycle is excellent, in line with current national goals.

## **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 of Management will continue to work with the subject teachers to ensure that schemes of work for the academic year 2019-2020 will be created collaboratively, with an emphasis on a time-bound nature of delivery, as recommended, to function as working documents.
- The Board is entirely supportive of the French department in its commitment to collaboratively developing a plan to facilitate the provision of consistent written, formative feedback for all students.
- The Board will support the department in applying for a language assistant at the next earliest opportunity. Additionally the Board will support the French department in a future e-Twinning initiative.
- The Board will seek to facilitate the provision of mixed-ability class groupings in junior cycle, as recommended.