

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Blackwater Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Ballyanchor Road Lismore Co Waterford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91509E

Date of Inspection: 14-03-2018



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

IMIS data for reference	SURE	Comment
Child Protection Outcomes	Not fully compliant with the checks undertaken at the time of the inspection visit	Statement not yet on display.

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 did not meet the requirements in relation to 1 above and therefore was not fully compliant with the checks undertaken. However, the school has subsequently furnished evidence of compliance with these requirements.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	13-03-2018 and 14-03-2018
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Blackwater Community School is a co-educational post-primary school in the trusteeship of Waterford and Wexford Educational and Training Board (WWETB), the Mercy and Presentation Sisters and the Christian Brothers. This growing school has a current enrolment of 768. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate (Established), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching in lessons observed was very good with scope for further development of some aspects of practice including the integration of a learning outcomes approach at junior cycle.
- Good quality learning was observed with students effectively engaged in inclusive and supportive learning environments.
- Teachers set high expectations for their students; uptake of higher level is very satisfactory and levels of attainment are generally very commendable although there is some scope to raise the level of student performance at the upper levels of Junior Certificate higher level.
- The quality of subject provision is very good with some notably strong elements of practice.
- Effective planning systems and structures have been established in the French department; these can now be used to enable planning for the junior cycle specification for Modern Foreign Languages.

Recommendations

- The French department should consider how the learning outcomes based approach of the junior cycle specification for Modern Foreign Languages could be used to enhance practice.
- Departmental collaboration should focus on the identification, embedding and evaluation of some specific teaching and learning strategies which could support the raising further of student performance at the upper levels of junior certificate higher level.
- Planning for junior cycle should evolve incrementally to reflect the requirements of the junior cycle specification for Modern Foreign Languages.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, the quality of teaching in lessons observed was very good with scope for further development of some aspects of practice including the integration of a learning outcomes approach at junior cycle. Good quality learning was observed with students effectively engaged in inclusive and supportive learning environments.
- All lessons had been thoroughly and conscientiously planned and prepared with an appropriate level of examination awareness in the relevant class groups. Preparation had included attention to lesson activities planned and to the selection, sourcing and, in some cases, the individual development of resources. This is commended.
- Lesson content had been selected so as to include attention to the various language skills and the development of cultural awareness. Thought had also been given to how to link lesson content to the lives of the students and current school activities. In some instances, the amount of content to be covered in a lesson was a little over-ambitious leading to a somewhat disjointed pace.
- In the main, lessons were conducted in the target language. Opportunities for student use of the target language were created by the use of strategies such as pair and group work. Regular use of group work is facilitated by the layout of desks in some of the classrooms. The inclusion of a peer-evaluator to provide feedback to fellow students engaged in oral pair work was a good initiative. Student oral interaction could be further supported by the systematic use of oral starts to lessons. The identification of specific learning outcomes to be achieved, and related linguistic structures to be acquired, would further support language acquisition. In this context, it was also suggested that greater use should be made of auditory material for teaching purposes especially in the early years of language acquisition. Such an approach avoids any need for undue reliance on translation and enables a greater level of collaborative composition where written production is concerned.
- Students were engaged in supportive and inclusive learning environments. Teachers worked with awareness of the needs of all students and homework was appropriately differentiated in examination classes. Lesson observation provided some good examples of the scaffolding of student learning and students demonstrated good recall. It was clear that students are being encouraged to develop good learning habits such as dictionary use and note-making. The devotion of a bit more time to the acquisition of linguistic structures in the initial years of language learning would enhance the quality of learning outcomes for students. Consideration should also be given to the use of approaches to reading and listening comprehension which would best develop students' skills as listeners and readers.
- There were some very good examples of in-class assessment to support learning including the aforementioned use of peer-evaluators and the requirement of students to review written work returned. The use of individual 'show-me' boards to answer questions encouraged individual student reflection and responses. Homework is assigned on a regular basis and is monitored. It was very positive to see learning opportunities being extended for TY students through the encouragement of the individual use of an online learning platform in the students' own time. Students are formally assessed at specific intervals in the school year. Students' oral competence is assessed at senior cycle. Consideration should now be given to the introduction of oral assessment in junior cycle also.
- It is very positive that high expectations are set for all students in mixed-ability classroom settings. Uptake of higher level is very satisfactory and levels of attainment are generally

very commendable although there is some scope to raise the level of student performance at the upper levels of Junior Certificate higher level.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision is very good with some notably strong elements of practice.
- French is one of two modern foreign languages offered in the school. Subject choice is informed by a subject-sampling programme at the start of first year.
- Time allocation is in line with national norms. The necessity to timetable double periods can be challenging for teachers to manage and can be challenging for language learners where frequent and regular exposure to the language is considered most beneficial.
- French teachers are classroom based and there were some very good examples of how the classrooms have been set up so as provide a supportive and stimulating learning environment. Classrooms are well-equipped.
- Subject provision is especially enhanced by the creation and maintenance of links with the target language country. The school has an established exchange programme and a pen-pal and e-twinning programme. Teachers, and all concerned, are commended for the time and commitment involved.
- Teachers are enthusiastic about the subject, professionally reflective and engaged in professional development formally and in a personal capacity. The whole-school approach to the promotion of the sharing of good practice also supports professional development.
- The quality of subject provision is very good with some notably strong elements of practice.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Effective planning systems and structures have been established in the French department. Teacher collaboration is consistent and committed.
- The role of subject coordinator rotates among the members of the subject department.
- A departmental plan and schemes of work have been prepared. Planning for junior cycle should now evolve to reflect the learning-outcomes based approach of the specification for junior cycle Modern Foreign Languages. There is also some scope to include an element of student evaluation in planning.
- The meetings of the French department could valuably focus on the identification, implementation and evaluation of some teaching and learning strategies which might result in the raising of levels of achievement at the upper levels of Junior Certificate.

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.

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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board is delighted to see that the quality of teaching and learning was very good.

The Board is delighted to see teachers acknowledged for setting high expectations.

It is affirming to find that the quality of subject provision is very good and that effective planning systems and structures have been established.

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 French Department is focused on the modern foreign languages approach as for J.C.
- The Department are reviewing the J.C. Higher level take up and target levels.
- Planning for junior cycle will continue as it has started by the French Department.