

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

**Subject Inspection of German**  
**REPORT**  
**Castleknock College**  
**Castleknock, Dublin 15**  
**Roll number: 60100Q**

**Date of inspection: 13 May 2013**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GERMAN**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	13 May 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching was very good in the lessons observed and the target language was used effectively by the teacher.
- Effective language teaching methodologies were used and student engagement was very good.
- Classroom management was good and a very positive learning environment was evident.
- Appropriate homework is assigned very regularly and monitored carefully.
- The provision for German is very good in terms of timetabling and resources. However the uptake for the language is lower than the other modern languages on offer in the school.
- Subject department planning for the teaching of the language is good and contains comprehensive information about the content of the German programme.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that more opportunities be created in lessons for students to use the target language and develop their oral skills.
  - The principles of Assessment for Learning (AfL) should be adopted. It is recommended that learning outcomes be made clear to the students at the beginning of lessons and that written formative feedback be recorded in all students' copybooks.
  - Strategies to encourage the uptake of the language among first-year students should be considered.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Castleknock College has an enrolment of 579 male students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate. German is an optional subject and is one of three modern languages on offer to all students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good. A wide variety of methodologies were used to good effect in the course of the inspection. In some lessons team teaching took place with a native German language assistant teacher. This was very beneficial to the students.
- The use of the target language by the teacher was very good. More opportunities need to be given to students to use the target language in the course of lessons. In particular students should be encouraged to form complete sentences. This will enable students to build confidence in the development of oral skills.
- Listening comprehension tasks were used effectively. In one lesson very good attention was paid to the use of pre-listening activities. This provided good scaffolding for the learners and had a positive effect on learning outcomes.
- There was good integration of the skills of language acquisition in some of the lessons observed. In one lesson students were given texts in German to read which were too difficult for the stage the learners were at. It is recommended that pre-reading strategies always be used to enable learners to access reading texts with greater ease.
- Lesson content in all lessons was appropriate to the requirements of the syllabus. Good effort was made to engage students' interest in lessons. In one lesson attention was paid to culture and information regarding different dialects in Germany was imparted effectively to the students.
- Students preparing for the state examinations were given appropriate information regarding the importance of examination technique. This is very good practice and contributes to effective preparation for these examinations.
- The classroom atmosphere in all lessons was very good. Students were on task and engaged well with the various activities.
- Classroom management was very good and teacher-student interactions were very positive.
- The learning environment is very good. The display of student work and materials relevant to the learning of German is commendable.
- A variety of modes of assessment were used in the course of lessons. It is recommended that student errors be used as learning opportunities and that students be given a clear understanding of what they need to improve. This will help in the consolidation of learning for the students.
- The techniques of assessment for learning (AfL) should be used more in the course of lessons. Clear learning outcomes should be communicated to the students at the beginning of lessons and assessment of these learning outcomes should take place in the course and at the conclusion of lessons.

- A sample of student copybooks was reviewed. Students are given an appropriate amount of homework and their written work is monitored regularly. In some cases students are repeatedly making the same mistakes. Strategies need to be put in place to address this.
- The written work of students in junior cycle needs to be monitored more closely. These students should be given very regular short written assignments. Formative written feedback should be given to the students to ensure that their writing skills develop appropriately.
- The development of student literacy skills is a key focus of school self-evaluation in Castleknock College. There was good emphasis in the lessons observed on developing students' literacy skills in line with the whole-school approach.

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

- Provision for German in the school is good. The timetabling for the subject is appropriate. All students enrolling in first year in Castleknock College have access to German. Choices regarding optional subjects are made in advance of students beginning first year.
- The uptake for German is lower than the other modern languages. Although there is a slight increase in the numbers in the first-year class, the average class size for the subject is 15 students.
- First-year students who have no particular favoured option in modern languages are encouraged to take German. It is suggested that the German department might consider a proactive approach and devise some positive strategies that could be put in place to encourage students enrolling in the school to choose the language.
- There are good co-curricular activities to support the learning of German. An exchange is organised for students in TY. This provides a wonderful opportunity to experience the language and culture at first hand.
- The German department adheres effectively to the whole-school assessment policy. Summative assessment of students' learning in German takes place at regular intervals and parents/guardians receive regular reports.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of subject department planning is good and the subject plan contains comprehensive details of the content of the programme for German. It would be beneficial if the intended learning outcomes for each year group could be recorded in the plan. The strategies to include information on the principles of AfL that will be used in the teaching of the subject should also be recorded.
  - Short-term planning and the planning for individual lessons were good.
  - Effective records are kept in all matters pertaining to subject department planning.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher 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 of Castleknock College welcomes the findings in the German Inspection Report. It is particularly satisfying that the quality of teaching, the classroom atmosphere and the classroom management were all deemed very good. It is very encouraging to find that “there was good emphasis in the lessons observed on developing students’ literacy skills in line with the whole school approach”.

In the Inspection Report it is stated that “First year students who have no particular favoured option in modern languages are encouraged to take German. This practice school be reviewed and positive strategies should be put in place to encourage students to choose the language”. While we understand that the German Department should do all it can to promote this language, it would be invidious for the College to promote one language over another. On our Opening Evening for prospective students we promote German, French and Spanish equally. Furthermore, the numbers taking up German have been increasing in recent years.

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

- 1 Castleknock College has adopted a Literacy Drive as its school self-evaluated improvement plan. One part of this drive is to encourage students to use the target language and to speak whole sentences if they can. The success of this drive will be reviewed annually.
- 2 The Assessment for Learning strategies have been adopted not just for German but for the whole school. For example it is accepted practice that teacher would announce the learning outcomes at the start of the lesson.
- 3 Castleknock College will continue to promote German through the open Evening and by letting prospective students know all that the German Department has to offer.
- 4 The German department along with the modern language departments reviewed the marking process in homework and established a “standard marking code” across the modern languages and Irish departments whereby errors in written production are highlighted and the student must assess his own mistakes. This practice promotes learner autonomy and supports the College drive towards improved literacy standards in line with Whole school policy.