

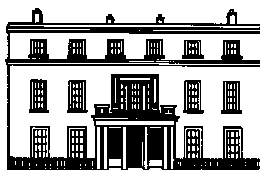
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Moyle Park College
Clondalkin, Dublin 22
Roll number: 60121B**

Date of inspection: 25 September 2013



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

REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN FRENCH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	26 September 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• 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 and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from fairly good to good.
- French, supported by translation, was the language of instruction in all of the lessons observed.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were more effective than others in promoting skills development and active learning.
- There is good whole-school provision and support for French.
- Subject planning has embarked on a new phase of development and is progressing well.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should use strategies that will extend their use of French and reduce students' dependence on translation to support their learning.
 - Opportunities for authentic classroom interaction in French should be maximised to support students' communicative confidence and competence.
 - Teachers should adopt a more integrated approach to teaching the different language skills.
 - Teachers should further exploit the benefits of information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning.
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INTRODUCTION

Moyle Park College is a voluntary secondary school with 674 male students. It has a broad socio-economic catchment, serving students from the village of Clondalkin and the surrounding area. The school offers the Junior Certificate (JC), the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and Transition Year, the established Leaving Certificate (LC), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The study of French is optional.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was fairly good or good. Areas for development include greater use of the target language and an integrated approach to language skills development.
- French was spoken by the teachers in all of the lessons observed, but was automatically supported by translation into English. It is recommended that teachers use alternative strategies such as gestures, visuals or setting new vocabulary in context before resorting to translation. Students should also be given the strategies to ask questions, express difficulty or make requests in French, thereby enabling them to communicate in simple French during the lesson. The very good project where students have made bookmarks containing relevant classroom language serves a good beginning in this regard.
- Learning outcomes were established at the beginning of all lessons. This is good practice as it supports good lesson structure and time management and gives students some responsibility for their own learning. However, teachers should ensure that the desired outcomes have specific knowledge and skills components as well as referring to aspects such as confidence building. The outcomes were revisited at the end of the lesson in some instances. This good practice should be extended to all lessons for the clear purpose of assessing student learning.
- A range of skills was promoted in lessons, but not always in an integrated way. To ensure the optimum acquisition of skills, a thematic approach is recommended where learning from aural and reading comprehensions activities feed into and support oral and writing skills development. An integrated approach also supports the effective teaching of grammar, where students learn correct syntax within the context of their overall learning.
- Question and answer sessions were observed in all lessons. Good practice was noted where teachers directed questions at students thereby ensuring full participation in addition to assessing their comprehension and progress. There were some lessons where question and answer sessions were used as the main methodology. In these instances a greater range of strategies should be used in order to maintain a better balance between teaching and testing.
- ICT was incorporated into all lessons to support learning. Teachers should extend this good practice by using video-clips, news items and PowerPoint presentations by students to enhance their linguistic skills and cultural awareness. ICT was used in one instance to identify places related to the topic on a map. This good practice could have been further exploited by asking students to locate places using the grids included on the map thereby supporting numeracy development in a cross-curricular way. ICT could also be used to source news headlines for the purpose of dictation exercises. Dictation was used in some lessons as a strategy to improve students' aural skills and correct spelling. This is good practice.

- The use of pair or group work as observed in all lessons is good practice. However, to optimise the benefits of group work, the tasks should be kept short and focused and have a clear need for interaction. Teachers could also consider asking students to talk for a short period of time on a given topic in order to build up their confidence and competence in oral communication.
- Supplementary worksheets were prepared for most lessons. In one instance they were differentiated in order to meet the varied needs of the student cohort. This very good practice should be further developed and extended to all lessons.
- Students were very well behaved and applied themselves to their work. Many however were timid or reticent in their responses to the inspector. The above-mentioned recommendations should support improved student competence and confidence.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons. An examination of students' copybooks indicated a need in some instances for greater attention to the correction of errors. In this regard students should be clear as to when homework is being monitored and when it is being corrected. As the year continues teachers should include more formative assessment in order to inform and support student progress.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good whole-school provision and support for French in the allocation of time, and the provision of resources. However, it is recommended that the provision of French as an optional subject should be reviewed. The failure to study a modern European language can have negative consequences for students' future education and career choices and the school needs to be satisfied that its students are not disadvantaged in this regard.
- Class formation in TY should be reviewed. The current practice where students who have completed junior cycle French are in the same class as students new to the language limits the opportunities for progress in TY.
- Classrooms are teacher based, thereby supporting the development of an attractive language learning environment. Some work in this regard has already begun and as the year progresses teachers should extend the range of classroom language and key expressions on display.
- As part of ongoing professional development teachers should investigate the range of scholarships and in-service programmes available for the purpose of linguistic and pedagogical upskilling.
- There are good ICT facilities and there was evidence to indicate that ICT is being used both in lessons and for homework assignments. Teachers should consider extending their use of ICT for the purpose of creating language and cultural links with a school in France.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is facilitated and the minutes from the first planning meeting of the current academic year indicate that a more proactive approach has been adopted to advancing the teaching and learning of French in the school. A subject plan is in place setting out the context for the teaching and learning of French. Schemes of work have

been developed outlining the vocabulary, grammar and culture to be taught. Learning outcomes and learner activities have also been included. It is recommended that teachers continue to build on this good work by including the methodologies and assessment protocols to be used.

- The current TY plan should be further developed to optimise the learning experiences for the students. When reviewing the plan, teachers should look at strategies that will afford students the greatest opportunity for promoting their communicative confidence and competence. Teachers should also keep in mind that any project work undertaken should be carried out in French.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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.

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 Use Of The Target Language

- Our aim is to speak as much of the target language as possible in the classroom
- We plan to focus on this year's first years and next year's incoming first years. We plan to build on this in the coming years. We want the use of the target language to become the norm and thereby reduce students' dependence on translation.
- We plan to have two/three minutes of oral work at the beginning of each class to encourage dialogue and to increase student's confidence in speaking the target language.
- All incoming first years will make bookmarks with "les mots clés" and use these throughout the year.

2 ICT

- We are currently working with the Language Initiative to help us to further exploit the use of ICT to support learning. While we make full use of the classroom ICT facilities, we aim to promote the use of ICT at home as a learning tool for the students.

3 Transition Year Plan

- We are currently working with the Languages to better our Transition Year Plan. We aim to introduce more active learning and bring the language alive in the classroom. Several staff members will be attending the PDST in-service on active methodologies on the 1st April.