

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Saint Kieran's College Secondary School
Kilkenny
Roll number: 61560J**

Date of inspection: 30 September 2011



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN FRENCH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	30 September 2011
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning was uniformly good in some lessons, while there was scope for development in others.
- There was varied use of the target language by the teachers in the lessons observed.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were used to better effect than others.
- The topic approach was used in all lessons leading, in many instances, to the good integration of grammar and language usage into the body of the lesson.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was effectively used in all lessons to support teaching and learning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater use of French as the language of instruction and communication is recommended in some instances.
 - Teachers should remain cognisant of the need to attribute due attention to all the language skills.
 - More varied and active methodologies are recommended in some instances.
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INTRODUCTION

St. Kieran's College is a voluntary secondary school with 682 male students. It has a broad socio-economic catchment with students coming from the city of Kilkenny and its hinterland. The study of modern European languages is mandatory in junior cycle and optional in senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There was varied use of the target language in the lessons observed. In some instances, French was used throughout by the teacher and very good efforts were made to avoid translation. Good attention to spelling in French and to pronunciation was also noted in many lessons. Where French was used to a more limited extent it should be built up. To this end, general classroom instructions should be given by the teacher in the target language. Students themselves should also be given the necessary strategies to ask questions, make requests and express difficulty in the target language. Language posters supporting French as the language of both instruction and communication should be displayed to support students in these endeavours.
- Most lessons were well structured and paced. The proposed lesson topic was outlined in all instances. However, a better balance between the consolidation of previous work and new learning is recommended in some lessons. To this end, and to engage students from the outset, teachers should articulate the lesson plan in terms of what the students should know by the end of the lesson. This enables teachers to structure and progress the lesson in accordance with planned outcomes.
- The use of topics, as observed in all lessons, is good practice as it facilitates an integrated approach to language skills development. There were some good examples of the effective integration of grammar and language usage into the body of some lessons. However, it is recommended that due attention is attributed to all the skills - aural, reading comprehension, oral and written skills and that students are made aware of how progress in one skills area can feed into and support other skills' development.
- A range of methodologies was observed. Question and answer sessions were used in all lessons. Good practice was noted in some instances where the effective use of open questions obliged students to move beyond monosyllabic or single sentence answers. However there were some lessons where question and answer sessions were the dominant methodology and the style of questioning resulted in some students not engaging at any point during the lesson. In these instances teachers should target the individual students who do not volunteer answers and also consider the use of peer question and answer sessions. They should also expand their range of methodologies to ensure greater variety and ongoing student engagement.
- Pair work was observed in one lesson and this is good practice. It is recommended that at least one pair or group activity be included in every lesson to promote oral skills development and to ensure active student engagement. Furthermore, students should be required to report back on the contributions of their peers. This will extend students' use of language in addition to ensuring that the work is carried out.
- ICT was used in all lessons. In some instances, it was for presentational purposes, while in others, ICT was used for revision and testing purposes. Video clips were used in some lessons to support the work in hand and this is good practice. To extend the benefits of ICT, consideration should be given to encouraging student presentations as part of work on oral skills development.

- Homework was assigned and corrected and a record is kept of students' marks. It is recommended that translation exercises be avoided in favour of opportunities for students to manipulate the language in a variety of ways. Where appropriate, teachers should consider the use of a formative comment as opposed to a mark to inform students of their ongoing progress. The practice of giving oral assessments in junior cycle is commended.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good whole school provision and support for French in the allocation of time and timetabling and in the provision of resources. However, strategies to improve the uptake of modern European languages at senior cycle should be developed.
- Classrooms are teacher-based. The rooms visited had attractive learning environments including a range of posters, student projects and some classroom language. These should be extended as the year progresses to include more classroom language and key expressions for the different topics studied.
- ICT is well advanced in the school and was used in all of the lessons observed.
- Links are currently being developed with a French school and this is good practice to support intercultural dialogue. To maximise the benefits of such links teachers should consider the interclass exchange of school news and projects as well as e-pals.
- As part of ongoing professional development teachers should inform themselves of and apply for the range of scholarships and in-service training programmes currently available for teachers of French.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Good work has been completed in subject planning in recent years. There is a subject co-ordinator, a position that is voluntary and rotated. Meetings are organised and minutes are kept. Given the small number of teachers in the French Department, consideration should be given to working with the members of the other languages departments for the purpose of strategic planning, while issues of a pragmatic nature could be dealt with separately by the individual subject departments.
- There is a subject plan for French and schemes of work have been developed to support the effective delivery of the subject. However, there is now a need to further progress the plan in such a way as to facilitate self-evaluation. To this end teachers should further develop their schemes of work to include learning outcomes, methodologies, resources and assessment protocols. A section of the subject plan should also include strategies for supporting literacy and numeracy in language lessons.
- More detail is needed in the Transition Year (TY) plan to indicate how the delivery of French responds to the general principles underpinning a meaningful language learning experience in TY.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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