

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Terence Mac Swiney Community College
Hollyhill, Cork**

Roll number: 71123Q

Date of inspection: 9 May 2013



**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 of inspection	9 May 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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good with well-structured and purposeful lessons.
- The target language was used consistently by the teachers.
- The very good classroom management created a positive and supportive classroom environment.
- Timetabling provision is very good.
- Subject department planning is linked with the school's Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- More emphasis should be placed on building students' oral skills through repetition and practice.
 - Serious consideration should be given to the introduction of a textbook for use with third-year class groups.
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INTRODUCTION

Terence Mac Swiney Community College is a co-educational post-primary school situated on the north side of Cork city. It is under the auspices of the City of Cork Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and has a current enrolment of 183 students. The school campus also houses the City North College of Further Education. The school offers a range of programmes including the established Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. A Transition Year (TY) programme will be introduced for the 2013-2014 school year. The school is a participant in the DEIS initiative.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed. Well-established routines were in evidence with the aims of the lesson shared with students and key words highlighted on a small whiteboard.
- The lessons were built around a topic and the methods chosen were appropriate to the students' abilities, needs and interests. The key language-learning skills of listening speaking, reading and writing were integrated into each lesson and linked with the topic as recommended in the syllabus.
- The target language was used consistently by the teachers and it was commendable that the special needs assistant (SNA) also communicated with students and with the teacher in French, as appropriate. This enhanced the creation of a language-learning environment and demonstrated how the language is a tool for communication. Gestures and images were used to good effect by the teachers. While this approach ensured that students understood the meaning of words, there was a tendency in one lesson for a translation to be given automatically. As this approach limited the opportunities for students to use their knowledge of French, it is recommended that translation should not be used unless necessary.
- Revision of prior learning and the teaching of new vocabulary were key elements of some lessons. While there was good modelling of language by the teacher and attention paid to pronunciation, there should be more time given to the repetition and practising of vocabulary by the students so as to assist them in becoming familiar with new words. This will also build their confidence in identifying vocabulary used in listening comprehensions.
- Grammar was taught clearly and students showed a good understanding of the rules. Inviting students to come to the board to write their sentences ensured that the students took particular care with accuracy at the preparatory stage of an exercise, and allowed for an element of peer learning when other students offered suggestions.
- A varied range of handouts and worksheets had been prepared and were utilised to good effect during the lessons. However, students in third year do not have a textbook for French and are therefore dependent on resources provided by the teacher. It is recommended that serious consideration be given to the introduction of a textbook.

- Classroom management was very good. Care was taken to create a positive and supportive learning environment while still ensuring that lessons were well paced and purposeful. Students were encouraged at all times to take an active part in the lesson and their progress was monitored through questioning. There was an emphasis on the successful completion of tasks and on building students' confidence through individual assistance and affirmation.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for modern foreign languages is good with both French and German offered in the school. Study of a language is compulsory in first year. In the current school year, it was decided to offer German only to first-year classes. As a result, there is a decrease in the overall number of students studying French. Timetabling provision for the subject is very good with single-class periods for all year groups in junior cycle and senior cycle. This is good practice in language learning as it allows for frequent class contact.
- The subject department is well resourced with data projectors and internet access in classrooms and tablet computers for the teachers. The teachers have their own base classrooms. Posters, maps and language charts are displayed on the walls and a range of additional resources are also stored in the classrooms.
- School management is very supportive of teacher professional development and the teachers have attended professional development courses in the use of new technology as well as on planning for the introduction of a TY programme and on key skills for junior cycle. A mentoring scheme is in place to support teachers who are new to the school.
- Co-curricular and extracurricular support for the language is good. The school has introduced tablet computers for students in first year. The students can also avail of the school library, a homework club and additional help for French under the University College Cork (UCC) ACCESS programme.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A comprehensive subject plan is in place which is regularly reviewed. One of the teachers acts as the subject coordinator and a formal meeting is held each term. Minutes of meetings are retained as part of the subject plan. Schemes of work for each year group have been prepared and it is good to note the highlighting of cultural elements within each class scheme.
- It is positive that planning targets for French are linked with the educational objectives of the school's DEIS plan. A key focus is increasing the uptake of higher level French in the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate. An analysis of student achievement is carried out by management and the results of the analysis are used to establish teaching and learning targets for the future.
- The school has a homework policy and an assessment policy. Student progress is assessed regularly with monthly assessments and more formal end of term examinations. Record-keeping is thorough and students' levels of achievement are tracked throughout

the year. It is positive that the teachers have already identified specific areas for further improvement which they hope to address during the planned TY programme. This is good practice, and a focus on one of the areas, namely aural skills would link well with a TY module on French songs.

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.