

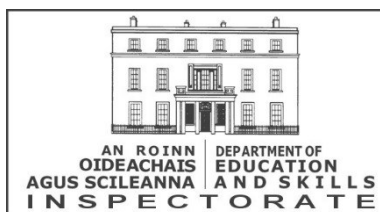
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Rathdown Secondary School
Glenageary, County Dublin
Roll number: 60090Q**

Date of inspection: 12 May 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	22 April, 12 May 2016
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 ranged from fair to very good in the lessons observed; the majority of lessons ranged from good to very good.
- The use of French as the language of instruction and communication was varied; it ranged from consistent use by the teacher and good efforts by students to limited use of French by both teacher and students.
- An integrated approach attributing due attention to all the language skills was observed in the majority of lessons; in others the focus was on teaching some of the language skills in isolation.
- A range of methodologies was observed, many of which were successful in promoting active student participation and learning; language learning outcomes were less successful in lessons where teacher instruction prevailed.
- There is very good whole-school support and provision for modern languages including French.
- The work completed in subject planning though commendable, is not currently a collaborative endeavour.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The use of the target language should be extended and students should be afforded more opportunities to interact in French with both the teacher and their peers.
- An integrated approach to the teaching of the different language skills should be adopted in all lessons and should also be used to support revision and examination preparation.
- The practice of formative assessment should be further developed and implemented by all members of the French department.

INTRODUCTION

Rathdown School is a fee-charging voluntary secondary school with 308 female students. It offers the Junior Certificate (JC), Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate (LC). The study of a modern foreign language is mandatory at junior cycle and optional at senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good or very good teaching and learning were observed in the majority of lessons. However, there was significant scope for development in one lesson regarding the use of the target language and methodologies attributing due attention to progressing all of the language skills.
- French was the language of instruction in the majority of the lessons observed. In some instances the teacher also used the target language to communicate with individual students and they in turn endeavoured to reciprocate in French. This good practice of promoting student use of the target language should be further advanced by creating more opportunities for spontaneous interactions as the year progresses.
- Where the target language was used to a more limited extent, strategies should be devised to extend the use of French as the language of the classroom and students should be challenged to their full potential to comprehend. They should also be afforded more opportunities to interact in French with both their teacher and their peers.
- The majority of lessons were well structured and paced and there was good attention to the consolidation of prior learning. Teachers began by outlining what they planned to do in the lesson. In order to accord students greater responsibility for their own learning, teachers should articulate their plans in terms of what students should learn in the lesson. Teachers should also revisit the learning intentions in order to assess students' progress.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were very effective in promoting active student participation and learning. There was one lesson however, where the grammar translation approach and the strong focus on examination preparation did not support optimal learning.
- Due attention was paid in the majority of lessons to developing all of the language skills. However, a more integrated approach is recommended in one lesson using listening and reading texts to advance students' comprehension skills. Opportunities should then be created to use these newly acquired skills to support the productive skills of speaking and writing. Elements of grammar should be identified within the texts used and the rules explained in context.
- Revision and examination preparation should also be carried out using an integrated approach. The language skills to be revised, if applied to a new context, should make revision a more active learning experience, while examination style questions should be used to assess learning rather than to dictate it.
- Student tasks were set in all lessons, thereby balancing teacher instruction and student activity. In one lesson the very good preparation and management of student presentations and follow-through activities enhanced the learning experience for all.
- While some of the student tasks observed were for the purpose of promoting oral skills development, others focused more on the completion of written exercises. It is recommended that all lessons incorporate at least one pair or group activity to promote

oral skills development. These tasks should be followed by a plenary session where students report back on the work of their partners. A very good example of this approach was observed in one lesson.

- Homework was assigned in all lessons and corrections with good examples of formative feedback were noted in some of the copybooks examined. This practice should be extended to all lessons and further developed. A number of students in one class group did not have copybooks with them. This should be addressed.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for modern languages including French. Students have access to three modern languages and senior cycle students have the opportunity to study a second language. The allocation of time and timetabling and the provision of resources for French is also very good.
- A very attractive language learning environment has been created in the classroom and it was well exploited in the majority of lessons to promote cultural awareness. This is commended.
- Some teachers have attended continuing professional development (CPD) events in recent years. All teachers should avail of the CPD opportunities offered annually to teachers of French for the purpose of pedagogical upskilling.
- The very good information and communication technology (ICT) resources were well exploited for the purpose of the lesson in one instance. Greater and more creative use of ICT to support active student engagement is recommended in some lessons.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Considerable work has been carried out in subject planning for French. The permanent section of the plan is very clearly laid out and detailed schemes of work have been developed for most class groups. The opportunity to include reflections in relation to work carried out is also very good practice.
- The different approaches contained in the schemes of work indicate that subject planning is completed by individual teachers and is not a collaborative endeavour. Given the number of language teachers in the school, consideration should be given to working more as a modern languages department for the purpose of affording all language teachers the opportunity to meet, discuss teaching and learning and develop collaborative schemes of work as appropriate.
- When developing common schemes of work, consideration could also be given to simplifying the format of the current schemes of work by using headings such as topic, learning outcomes, methodologies, resources and assessment. Differentiation, literacy and numeracy could be appropriately incorporated into methodologies and assessment protocols.
- The TY plan proposes a number of topics which respond very well to the principles of an effective TY programme. To further enhance the plan it is recommended that material directly relevant to the senior cycle programme for French be addressed in a manner that will avoid it becoming repetitive as a topic when studied at a later stage.

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 of the school 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management has noted the comments made by the Inspection process. They thank the Inspectorate for their work and note the 'very good support and provision for modern languages' highlighted. The Board is pleased to note that in the 'majority of lessons the instruction ranged from good to very good' and also that the 'very good whole-school support' was endorsed. The Board looks forward to continued engagement with the Inspectorate, helping the school in the identification of areas that require attention.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The modern language department has taken on board the recommendations in this report and is implementing plans to address and action each one in this academic year.