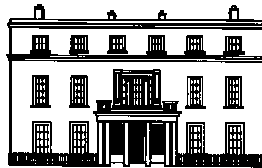


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of French**  
**REPORT**

**Cross and Passion College**  
**Kilcullen, County Kildare**  
**Roll number: 61690W**

**Date of inspection: 23 January 2014**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	22 and 23 January 2014
<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 five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with some examples of very good or excellent practice.
- French was used as the language of instruction in all of the lessons observed and good efforts were made to promote student use of the language.
- A range of methodologies was observed, many of which effectively supported the development of the different language skills.
- Active student learning was promoted in most lessons through the effective use of pair work.
- Homework corrections in one lesson indicated very good attention to formative assessment practices.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Due attention should be given in all lessons to the development of all the language skills.
  - Discussion of teaching and learning for the purpose of sharing best practice should be incorporated into subject department meetings.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Cross and Passion College is a co-educational voluntary secondary school with 694 students. It has a broad socio-economic catchment, serving students from the village of Kilcullen and the surrounding area. The school offers the Junior Certificate (JC), Transition Year, the established Leaving Certificate (LC), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The study of a modern European language is mandatory and students can choose between French and German.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good with some examples of very good or excellent practice. Where there was scope for improvement it related to a need for greater clarity of learning outcomes and the reduction of translation as a methodology to support writing skills development.
- The target language was consistently used by the teachers in all of the lessons observed. Good efforts were also made in a number of instances to actively encourage student interaction in French. Attention to pronunciation was noted in some instances. This good practice should be extended to all lessons through the use of short regular pronunciation drills.
- As part of their literacy strategy, all teachers have posted up on the classroom walls useful expressions for classroom interaction in French. In one instance, the teacher afforded students the opportunity to practise their key expressions and to extend their skills by demonstrating how these expressions could be used across contexts. This exemplary practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Some teachers outlined their lesson plan in terms of the content to be covered. It is recommended that the plan be reframed in terms of the intended learning outcomes. This should make students more aware of their responsibilities in the learning process in addition to supporting good lesson structure and the management of time. These outcomes should be reviewed at the end of the lesson in order to assess student progress.
- All teachers endeavoured to develop a range of language skills among the students. Listening activities were used in most lessons and this is good practice. It is recommended that teachers vary their use of listening texts; in addition to the usual information retrieval tasks, teachers should use listening texts as a springboard for discussion or for the teaching of grammar. Where students are experiencing difficulties with a listening text, preparatory activities such as brainstorming relevant vocabulary, or exercises using the transcript should be considered. All of the above suggestions will facilitate a more integrated approach to language acquisition.
- In some lessons teachers focused primarily on the receptive skills of aural and reading comprehension. While these are essential stages in students' linguistic development, due attention should also be given to students' oral and writing skills development. To this end, tasks should be set in each lesson to promote students' oral proficiency and incrementally advance their writing skills.
- Mind maps were used in one lesson to support the learning of vocabulary. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons and further developed to build up families of words. This should support students in their efforts to build up sentences from words and transferring their learning across contexts.

- A very good approach to the teaching of grammar within the context of a given topic was observed in one lesson. It involved isolating relevant grammar points, explaining and consolidating them and showing how they can be applied in different contexts. A very good whole-class approach to the correction of errors was also observed.
- PowerPoint presentations were used in many lessons for the correction of work or providing notes of relevance to the work in hand. Teachers should extend their use of information and communication technology (ICT) to include up-to-date news items, video clips, visuals and extracts from You Tube, thereby supplementing the text books in use.
- Pair work, as observed in lessons, had two different functions. In some lessons pair work was used to develop students' oral skills and the assigned tasks were effective in actively engaging the students. In one instance pair work was seamlessly integrated into the lesson through the assessment for learning (AfL) strategy of 'think pair share'. In another instance peer interaction was effectively supported through the use of a bank of questions built up over the year in accordance with the topics studied.
- Pair work was also used to afford students the opportunity to work individually, but to seek help from their peers where necessary. While this is a valid exercise for the purpose of helping students with their learning, it does not explicitly support oral skills development and should not be confused as such.
- Translation was used as a methodology for building up writing skills in one lesson. In this instance alternative strategies such as the use of specific writing frames would better support learning.
- Examination practice was observed in some lessons and was appropriate for the time of year. However, it is recommended that examination papers be used as part of the assessment phase of teaching and learning rather than dictating the lesson.
- Homework was assigned, corrected and signed and in many instances an affirmative comment included. In some of the copybooks examined the comments indicated to students their areas of strength or scope for development. This good practice should be extended throughout. It is also recommended that the less effective practice of assigning translation exercises be avoided.
- Students engaged with the work in most of the lessons observed and their answers indicated good evidence of learning and a willingness to communicate in the target language.

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

- There is good whole-school provision and support for French in the allocation of time, timetabling and the provision of resources.
- Many of the members of the French department have availed of professional development courses for teachers of French and this is commended. To further support pedagogical up-skilling, teachers could consider in-service training on assessment for learning (AfL) or co-operative learning.
- Consideration should also be given to establishing links with a French school for purpose of exchanging resources and promoting intercultural dialogue.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A subject plan is in place for French, setting out the school context and outlining schemes of work for each year group. To build on this good work, teachers should include with their general learning outcomes, detail on proposed methodologies, assessment protocols and literacy and numeracy interventions. This will help teachers in the process of self-evaluation. Teachers should also incorporate more discussion of teaching and learning into subject department meetings for the purpose of sharing some of the very good practices noted in the report.
- The Transition Year (TY) plan should include greater detail on the proposed activities to ensure that teaching and learning is in line with the principles of an effective TY programme.
- When analysing the outcomes of state examination results, teachers should focus on trends from year to year, on the uptake of levels and on gender differences in order to ensure that all students are constantly challenged to reach their full potential.

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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.