

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of GERMAN
REPORT**

**Ardcoil na Trionóide
Athy, County Kildare
Roll number: 68077S**

Date of inspection: 18 November 2015



**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 GERMAN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	18 November 2015
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, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching was very good with many examples of excellent practice, particularly in senior cycle, evident in the course of lesson observation.
- Teacher use of the target language in senior cycle was outstanding and the level of comprehension among students was of the highest standard.
- The quality of student learning was exceptional in lessons where very high expectations were set for students and learners were set challenging tasks that facilitated independent and deep learning.
- Classroom management in all lessons was very good and students were on task at all times.
- There is a taster programme in place for first-year students and the number of students choosing German is increasing.
- The quality of subject planning is very good and there is a strong focus on student learning outcomes and effective teaching methodologies.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should provide formative written feedback to students with clear indicators on how the learners can improve their German written work and a consistent approach to this should be taken across the German department.
- In the development of oral skills, particularly in junior cycle, teachers should provide more opportunities to scaffold student learning in advance of participating in role plays by giving the learners increased time to repeat the relevant phrases and sentences.
- The practice of streaming the German class groups in junior cycle should be reviewed and every effort should be made to establish mixed-ability class groups.
- All members of the subject department should avail of opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) and this should be encouraged by management.

INTRODUCTION

Ardcoil na Tríonóide is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of a Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust. The current enrolment in the school is 833. The Transition Year (TY) programme is optional in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching was very good with many examples of excellent practice evident particularly in senior cycle.
- The quality of teacher use of the target language ranged from outstanding to good. Where excellent use of the target language was evident, it was clear that students were benefitting hugely from the rich linguistic environment and the level of student comprehension was of the highest standard.
- Students' use of the target language was developed by a variety of methods particularly through the use of role plays in junior cycle. In some instances students struggled to perform the role plays. To support the development of students' oral competence, teachers need to scaffold activities whereby students get lots of opportunities to repeat phrases in advance of conducting role plays.
- A range of excellent teaching methodologies was used in many lessons. Brainstorming, video clips, work sheets and individual learning tasks all contributed to effective teaching.
- The use of strategies associated with assessment for learning (AfL) were very good. In one lesson observed students were constantly assessing their own learning through the use of the "traffic light" strategy. The use of AfL could be developed further and extended to all lessons.
- The quality of student learning ranged from excellent to good. Learning was of the highest quality where very high expectations were set for students and the learners were set challenging tasks and higher-order questions that enabled them to work independently and think for themselves.
- Student engagement for the most part was very good and in some lessons it was obvious how much the learners enjoyed learning German. Learners were highly motivated by strategies such as the "dazzle" initiative, where students were required to produce answers of the highest standard.
- Classroom management in all lessons was very good and students were on task at all times. Student behaviour was exemplary in the lessons observed.
- In the lessons observed, the German language assistant contributed well to the students' learning and teachers are commended for their team-teaching approach.
- Students are assessed across all skills of language acquisition on a regular basis. There was evidence that students' written work is being corrected on a regular basis. To support student learning, written formative feedback should be given to the learners and a co-ordinated approach to this should be taken within the German department.
- Classrooms provided an effective learning environment for students and featured prominent displays of student work. In the main German classroom, each class group has its own noticeboard thus giving students a very good sense of ownership over their learning environment.

- Good attention was paid to developing students' literacy skills in some lessons. An excellent example of numeracy was evident where students were set challenges to identify irregular grammatical patterns in verb and tense formation. These excellent practices could be extended to all lessons.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good support for the teaching of German in the school and good timetabling arrangements are in place in terms of the frequency and distribution of lessons. Concurrent timetabling operates in junior cycle, however the second and third-year class groups are streamed. This approach should be reviewed and mixed-ability groupings should be maintained throughout junior cycle.
- There is a taster programme in place for first-year students and the numbers of students taking the subject are increasing. German is well resourced and the additional resource of a German language assistant is being very well deployed to support teaching and learning.
- A German language exchange is organised as part of the co-curricular programme for the subject and this provides students with excellent opportunities to experience the culture and language of the country including the opportunity of attending school in Germany.
- The subject co-ordinator has availed of significant CPD opportunities both in terms of linguistic and pedagogical upskilling and the benefits of this to the students were overwhelmingly evident in lessons. It is important that all members of the subject department avail of some opportunities for CPD and the school management should actively encourage this for the benefit of the learners.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject planning is very good and the subject plan contains a good focus on student learning outcomes, effective teaching methodologies and assessment practices. An emphasis on planning for developing students' literacy and numeracy skills was also noted.
- Subject planning meetings are held on a regular basis and the teachers of modern languages meet together which is very good practice. Good minutes of the meetings are kept in the subject folder and a collaborative approach to planning was evident. The effective practice of analysing the certificate examination results is noted.
- The plan for German in TY is good in that it is thematic in nature. However, there is scope for development of this plan to include more cross-curricular components.

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

Published April 2016

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 is very pleased with the excellent report of the German inspection. The Board wishes to express its gratitude to the German Department for their commitment to the teaching of German in the School. They welcome the very relevant recommendations and will use these as a basis for further improving the quality of teaching and learning in the department.

The board will ask management to meet with the German department to both acknowledge the excellent work and dedication of our teachers both to the students and the subject. They will also investigate ways to improve on the provision for German to maintain and enhance the already excellent work already being done in the school.