

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of French
REPORT
Newbridge College
Newbridge, County Kildare
Roll number: 61680T

Date of inspection: 10 May 2013



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	9 and 10 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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good or very good with many examples of excellent and creative practice.
- The target language was used to varying degrees by the teachers in the lessons observed.
- Student learning was enhanced by good use of information and communication technology (ICT), differentiation and pair or group tasks.
- Very good assessment practices are in place to facilitate independent learning and to inform students of their overall progress.
- There is good whole school provision for French and good work has been completed in subject planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The use of French as the language of instruction and communication should be built up incrementally as from first year.
 - Greater attention should be given to the productive skills of speaking and writing in some lessons.
 - The good practices contained in teachers' individual schemes of work should be amalgamated into unified schemes of work for each year group and extended to include proposed methodologies and assessment practices.
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INTRODUCTION

Newbridge College is a co-educational secondary school with 835 students. It is a fee-charging school serving the town of Newbridge and its hinterland. Two modern European languages, French and German, are offered in junior and senior cycle and students have the option of studying two languages.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good or very good with many examples of excellent and creative practice. There was one lesson where there was scope for development in the use of more active methodologies.
- French was used consistently by the teachers in the majority of lessons with corresponding efforts by students to interact in the language. However, French was used to a more limited extent in a small number of lessons. Since the use of the target language is universally considered to be the most effective approach to the teaching of a language, all teachers should ensure that they build up the use of the target language incrementally as from first year.
- Lessons were well structured and paced. Learning objectives or outcomes were communicated to students in almost all lessons. Exemplary practice was noted in some lessons where the outcomes were revisited at the end. The practice of revisiting outcomes should be extended to all lessons in order to assess student progress.
- A range of methodologies was observed, most of which were very effective in supporting learning. Elements of an integrated approach to teaching the different language skills were observed in most lessons. In lessons where teachers focused more on the receptive skills of listening and understanding, it is recommended that greater attention be given to oral and writing skills development. The teaching of grammar was very well integrated into the work of one lesson. This good practice should be extended to all lessons, in particular, lessons where grammar is taught as discrete skill
- ICT was used in all lessons and there were some very good examples of the effective use of ICT that significantly enhanced the work of the lesson. In one lesson, the use of good preparatory and follow-up activities resulted in the very effective exploitation of a video clip. Students in another lesson had the opportunity to use ICT to support their own learning. Where this opportunity is provided, it is recommended that individual work be interspersed with some whole-class teaching to ensure ongoing student engagement.
- Very good practice was noted in many lessons, where teachers maximised the potential of all students through the use of graphic organisers, differentiated worksheets and activity cards. Games or game-like activities, used for the purpose of consolidating learning, enhanced the enjoyment of learning French. The use of cartoons, as noted in one lesson, served to introduce a topic in a very creative manner, in addition to promoting an appreciation of French humour.
- Pair or group work for the purpose of oral skills development was observed in a number of lessons. Of particular note was the use of laminated cards with a range of questions to structure the tasks assigned. It is recommended that pair or group work be incorporated into every lesson. Consideration could also be given to asking students to report back on their partners' contributions, thereby extending their mastery of the language. Independent and co-operative learning were very effectively promoted in one lesson where students, working individually, were told they could seek help from their peers.

- Most students engaged very positively with the work of the lesson. They responded well to questions asked and applied themselves to the tasks assigned. Their interactions with the inspector indicated good evidence of learning and willingness to communicate.
- Very good homework practices were noted throughout the subject department. Homework was regularly assigned and corrected, with formative feedback provided as appropriate. Teachers also maintained good records of the work assigned and corrected. Good work has been carried out to support independent student learning through the use of the social learning platform 'Edmodo'. In Transition Year (TY), where the choice of homework assignments may prove more difficult to devise, consideration could be given to the creation of a reflective journal to be filled in by the students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good whole-school provision and support for French in the allocation of time and in the provision of resources.
- An attractive print- rich environment has been developed in all of the classrooms visited. Consideration could be given to further developing the current displays by posting up expressions for the week or the topic and encouraging students to integrate them into lessons. This would support the school's literacy strategy. The use of notice-boards in the corridors to promote participation and success in French-related activities is commended as it affirms student achievement in addition to raising the profile of the subject.
- Very good practices exist within the school and the French department to support ongoing professional development. These include attendance at courses organised by the French Teachers' Association, a learning café where all teachers share good practice with their peers and suggestions for good practice disseminated to all teachers by the ICT co-ordinator. Teachers should also consider availing of the range of scholarships funded by the Department of Education and Skills and the French Cultural Services for teachers of French.
- The highly commendable range of co-curricular activities provided for students of French is supportive of ongoing language learning and cultural awareness.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The teachers of French present as a dynamic subject department. This is reflected in the regularity of meetings throughout the year and in the sharing of good practice.
- A well-developed subject plan is in place for French. Teachers have also developed annual schemes of work for their own class groups. In the interests of cohesion and consistency it is recommended that the good practices contained in these individual schemes of work be amalgamated to produce a unified scheme of work for each year group and extended to include the proposed methodologies and the assessment practices. The inclusion of space for reflection to support self-evaluation and the sharing of good practice could also be considered.
- The curriculum content contained in the TY plan is appropriate to a TY programme. However, further detail is needed in terms of the proposed methodologies and time-frame. When reviewing the TY plan, teachers should also consider a modular system which could be planned in accordance with the teachers' areas of interest and expertise.

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.