

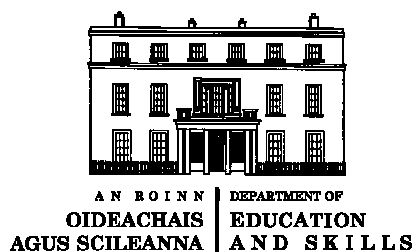
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of GERMAN
REPORT**

**Piper's Hill College,
Naas, County Kildare
Roll number: 70710D**

Date of inspection: 4th February 2014



REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GERMAN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	3 rd and 4 th February 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching of German was very good overall and the very competent use of the target language by teachers in all lessons is highly commended.
- A range of effective methodologies was used to develop the students' communicative competence and the integration of the four skills of language acquisition in lessons was very good.
- The very good practice of giving students formative feedback on written assignments was evident.
- The classroom atmosphere in all lessons was very positive and student behaviour was excellent.
- The numbers of students taking German has increased significantly this year.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to enhance student competence in the target language it is recommended that increased opportunities for student oral production be incorporated into lessons and that the formal register (*Sie*) be used in senior cycle,
- It is recommended that the strategies associated with the principles of Assessment for Learning (AfL) be incorporated into all lessons and that students' written work be corrected in line with AfL strategies.
- It is recommended that, as a matter of priority, the school management ensure that the minimum requirement of 28 hours instruction time per week be provided to all students, in line with circular M 29/95.
- To facilitate the sharing of the excellent practice observed, it is recommended that members of the German department engage in peer collaborative review.

INTRODUCTION

Piper's Hill College is a co-educational post-primary school under the auspices of the Kildare Wicklow Education and Training Board. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in our School (DEIS) action plan. The current enrolment is 919.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching ranged from excellent to good with the overall quality being very good. The competent use of the target language by teachers was uniformly very good in all lessons.
- A range of effective teaching methodologies was used to promote and develop communicative competence in German. The emphasis on strategies to integrate the skills of language acquisition: listening, speaking, reading and writing was very good. The good use of information and communication technology (ICT) also enhanced student learning outcomes.
- Students' use of the target language ranged from excellent to good. Excellent practice was noted in a lesson whereby students had plentiful opportunities to practise full sentences, mini dialogues and engage in student-student interaction. This resulted in excellent student use of German which was both fluent and accurate.
- To enhance student competence in the target language across all class groups, it is recommended that every lesson begin with oral 'warm up' activities with plenty of repetition. More opportunities for student-student interaction need to be integrated into lessons. It is suggested that in order to ensure greater accuracy in oral production, students need to be provided with dedicated pronunciation exercises.
- In senior cycle lessons it was noted that only the informal register (*du*) was used. As the use of this is penalised in the certificate examinations, it is strongly recommended that the formal register (*Sie*) be used in line with the recommendations of the Chief Examiners' reports on the certificate examinations available at www.examinations.ie.
- Lesson content was appropriately theme based in line with syllabus requirements. It is recommended that the techniques of brainstorming and mind maps be used to elicit students' prior knowledge of vocabulary associated with various themes.
- The main method of assessing student learning in the course of lessons was through questioning. To avoid situations where some students do not answer questions, the use of AfL strategies such as: no hands, think, pair, share and the individual student use of mini-white boards is recommended. Oral assessment occurs as part of the formal and summative assessment processes in the school. The excellent practice of enabling the students to participate in the optional oral for the junior certificate examination is noted.
- The very good practice of giving formative feedback on written assignments is commended. To enhance students' written skills in German, it is recommended that students review their own work before submitting it. It is suggested that students be required to analyse their own mistakes and complete follow-up activities. Students should receive short written assignments on a regular basis which are corrected in the manner outlined.
- Good attention was paid to the development of literacy skills in some lessons. To build on the good practice observed and in order to fulfil the stated actions in the school's DEIS plan for literacy development, it is suggested that students note new key vocabulary in all lessons.

- The classroom atmosphere in all lessons was very positive and student behaviour was exemplary. The learning environment was print-rich and featured displays of posters and very good student work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for German and the numbers of students taking the subject have increased significantly this year. The German department is well resourced: there is a modern fully-equipped language laboratory in the school. A German language assistant is funded for the current academic year through the Department of Education and Skills foreign language assistant scheme.
- Timetabling for the subject is overall good. However, where German is scheduled first lesson in the morning or after lunch, up to ten minutes from the allocated class time can be lost due to the fact that registration takes place. It is recommended that, as a matter of priority, the school management ensure that the minimum requirement of 28 hours instruction time per week be provided in line with circular M29/95.
- The German department has established the very laudable practice of setting up an electronic folder to share resources. It is suggested that if budgets permit, some German language learning materials could usefully be acquired to support the development and growth of the subject.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A co-ordinator for the subject is in place. In order to support the work of coordination, it is suggested that a written description of the role of subject co-ordinator be agreed by staff and senior management.
- Some formal meetings and a lot of informal collaboration take place among teachers of German. To build on the good practice, it is suggested that at subject department meetings effective teaching and learning strategies be discussed and documented.
- In line with best practice, the subject plan contains schemes of work which are theme based and specify the intended learning outcomes. However, the teaching methodologies and assessment sections need to be expanded.
- As part of DEIS planning the subject department plan should be further developed to reflect the relevant targets and strategies for the development of literacy, numeracy and increased examination attainment. In terms of literacy and numeracy, strategies which will be employed in German lessons should be planned and documented for each year group. Analysis of examination attainment in the certificate examinations should be included in the subject plan and targets should be set in line with the school's DEIS targets.
- As part of effective self-evaluation practices student questionnaires could be used to establish what helps students learn German best. In order to facilitate the sharing of the

excellent practice observed in the course of the inspection teachers would benefit from engaging in peer collaborative review.

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