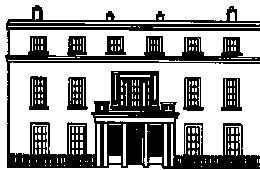


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of GERMAN
REPORT

Scoil Mhuire Community School
Clane, County Kildare
Roll number: 91372D

Date of inspection: 8th April 2016



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	7 th and 8 th April 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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- There is scope to develop the quality of teaching and learning of German and there is significant scope to develop the accuracy and frequency of teacher use of the target language in the classroom.
- A variety of good teaching methods were used in most lessons.
- The classroom atmosphere in the majority of most lessons was good or very good and student-teacher rapport was positive.
- Senior management is very supportive of German and the numbers of students taking the subject are increasing.
- The provision of a lunch time German club where senior cycle students peer tutor junior cycle students of German is excellent.
- The quality of written subject planning for German is very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers need to implement a more consistent approach to using the target language in the classroom both in terms both of accuracy and frequency.
- More authentic German listening material should be used in lessons and pre- and post-listening strategies should be provided to the students in order to scaffold successful student learning.
- A consistent approach to implementing strategies associated with assessment for learning (AfL) should be adopted by the teachers of German in lessons and students should be provided with formative written feedback on their work.

- Teachers need to avail of opportunities for continuing professional development (CPD) relating both to linguistic and pedagogical upskilling.

INTRODUCTION

Scoil Mhuire Community School is a large co-educational post-primary school situated in Clane, Co Kildare. The current enrolment is 1100 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate. German is offered as an optional subject in all programmes with the exception of the LCA.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There is scope to develop the overall quality of teaching and learning in German in the school.
- In most of the lessons observed, there was significant scope for teachers to develop their use of the target language. During lessons some teachers made basic grammatical and linguistic errors both in spoken and written German. In order to fulfil the requirements of the syllabus, teachers need to understand fully the rationale for using the target language and a departmental plan needs to be put in place to improve the accuracy and frequency of teacher use of the target language in the classroom.
- In the course of lessons few listening comprehension tasks were assigned. Students need to be exposed to a rich linguistic environment and listening materials spoken by native speakers should be used more frequently in lessons. Where listening comprehension tasks are provided to the students teachers need to incorporate pre- and post-listening activities as scaffolding for effective learning. It is essential for teachers to circulate among the learners, in order to monitor student comprehension during the listening tasks.
- A variety of good methodologies was used in most lessons. These included pair work, group work and brainstorming. In some lessons good use was made of teacher developed materials such as games, puzzles and worksheets.
- Good strategies were used in some lessons to facilitate student oral work. To build on the good practice observed it is suggested that daily rituals be established whereby students engage in basic oral conversation about every day topics at the start of every lesson. The repetition of these daily conversations will allow students to build confidence in their oral German.
- Lesson content, in line with syllabus requirements, was almost always theme based. However, in two senior cycle lessons the content was too basic and more appropriate to junior cycle standard. When choosing lesson content teachers need to ensure that content includes some new vocabulary and expressions so as to extend the learners' competence in the language.
- Classroom atmosphere in most lessons was good or very good and teacher-student rapport was positive. The good practice of praising and affirming students' efforts was noted. However, in one lesson observed the relationship between students and the teacher was clearly not optimal due to the students' confusion about the amount of and pace of delivery of material which was being presented and their inability to complete tasks as a result.

- The learning environment in all lessons was very good. The base classrooms for German contained lots of student work, posters and excellent displays of appropriate material which students frequently consulted when answering questions. Teachers are to be commended for the displays of German materials on the corridors.
- Base classrooms are provided for German. In one classroom the layout of desks facilitates a more communicative approach. The seating arrangements in the main base classroom could be rearranged into group style setting to facilitate a more student-centred approach.
- In a junior cycle lesson an excellent example of peer assessment was observed. Students corrected each other's work, wrote developmental comments in German and were invited to explain any errors they had made. This practice could usefully be adopted across the whole German department.
- There was scope to develop the overall quality of student learning in the lessons observed. While student engagement was very good, in some lessons the pace and methodologies did not facilitate optimal learning. It is important to scaffold all activities so that students experience success and build confidence in the language.
- Students were assigned homework and a review of copybooks indicates that their work is monitored and corrected. Teachers need to adopt strategies associated with AfL in their classroom practice and should provide students with written formative feedback on their work.
- There is a German department assessment policy. Oral and aural assessments take place in both junior and senior cycle. The weighting of marks allocated to oral and aural assessment in junior cycle should be reviewed to better reflect the aims of the German syllabus and consideration should be given to introducing the optional oral for the Junior Certificate.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for German is very good and the senior management team is very supportive of the subject. All students entering first year have the option of studying German and the uptake for the subject is increasing.
- Timetabling is good and there are good resources to support German. There are some co-curricular activities to support the teaching and learning of German and the in-class library in one senior cycle class is a good example of this. The provision of a lunch time German club where senior cycle students peer tutor junior cycle students is excellent.
- The school is engaged in an excellent whole-school teaching and learning project (TL21) and some teachers of German have availed of subject specific CPD in the recent past. However, there is a need for teachers to avail of CPD opportunities both in terms of linguistic and pedagogical upskilling. Management should ensure that a record of participation in CPD is kept, that the learning is shared among teachers and that it has an impact on classroom practice.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of the written subject department plan for German is very good. The schemes of work included a focus on theme-based content and learning outcomes. An updated list

of resources available, the use of AfL strategies and a common approach to the correction of homework should now be documented in the plan.

- Planning for individual lessons varied in quality. In one instance planning was poor and the materials for the lessons were not checked in advance for accuracy. Individual lesson planning should focus on student learning outcomes, developmental content and optimal AfL strategies to ensure students can complete tasks assigned to them.
- In some cases teachers made great efforts to incorporate recommendations made in the course of the inspection into planning for, and delivery of, lessons and are to be highly commended for this very professional and open approach.
- There is scope to develop the role of co-ordinator to ensure that there is a departmental approach to teaching, learning and assessment and to ensure the facilitation of best practice across the department.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.