

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of German
REPORT**

**Our Lady of Mercy Secondary School,
Waterford City, County Waterford
Roll number: 64971W**

Date of inspection: 13 December 2013



**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	13 December 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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good.
- Teacher use of the target language in the lessons observed was very good.
- A variety of effective methodologies was used to develop communicative competence in the learners.
- The classroom atmosphere in all lessons was conducive to effective learning and the print rich environment in the classrooms was highly commendable.
- The quality of subject department planning and individual lesson planning was very good.
- Whole-school support for the teaching and learning of German is very positive.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that strategies associated with assessment for learning (AfL) be adopted in all German lessons.
 - It is recommended that a review take place regarding how students' written work is corrected and that increased emphasis be placed on guided student self-assessment and student correction of errors to ensure the best possible learning outcomes.
 - The subject plan should be developed to include more information on intended students learning outcomes, differentiated methodologies and analysis of state examination data.
-

INTRODUCTION

Our Lady of Mercy secondary school is located in the heart of Waterford city and is a long established voluntary post-primary school for girls. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The current enrolment is 555.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teacher use of the target language in all lessons was very good. In some lessons students had good opportunities to use German to interact with one another. This practice should be increased so as to maximise student use of the target language in all lessons. In one instance the lesson began with the very effective practice of an oral warm up activity. It is recommended that this be extended to all lessons to encourage students to become more familiar with speaking in the target language.
- In most lessons observed there was good integration of the skills of language acquisition. Students had opportunities to listen and read German texts and in some cases to write and speak German.
- Lesson content in all cases was good and appropriate to the needs of the learners. In one lesson students preparing for the state examinations were provided with effective strategies for dealing with prescribed oral examination material. However, it is recommended that in senior cycle lessons all students and teachers use the formal register (Sie) when addressing one another as this is what is required in the state examinations.
- In one instance the use of Information and Communication Technologies (ICT) enhanced the lesson content where learners were shown images of Christmas markets in Germany. The use of ICT could usefully be extended in lessons.
- The quality of student learning was good and students engaged very well in all tasks assigned to them.
- A variety of methodologies was used to promote effective learning including group and pair work. Due to the fact that all class groups are mixed ability, it is recommended that a greater emphasis be placed on differentiation in terms of teaching methodologies.
- Assessment practices varied in the lessons observed and some opportunities for students to self assess or monitor their own work were not exploited fully. It is recommended that the principles of assessment for learning (AfL) be used in all lessons. Strategies such as use of mini white boards, no hands, increased teacher wait time when posing questions, self and peer assessment need to be introduced to lessons on a regular basis.
- From a review of a sample of student copybooks, it is evident that students' written tasks are monitored and corrected by teachers regularly. It is recommended that the method of correcting written assignments be reviewed and that students be encouraged to understand and correct their own mistakes rather than having all corrections written into their work by teachers as is currently the practice.
- A very good classroom atmosphere was noted in all lessons observed. There was a very good rapport between teachers and students and all interactions were characterised by mutual respect.
- Classroom management was excellent and students were very well behaved at all times.
- German is taught in two base classrooms and these classrooms provide a high quality learning environment for students. The classrooms are beautifully decorated with a print

rich environment containing student work, maps, posters and other relevant material to support the teaching and learning of German.

- Very good attention was paid to developing literacy skills among learners in the lessons observed. The use of brainstorming as a technique to elicit students' prior knowledge of vocabulary was very effective as was the emphasis placed on key words and phrases. In one lesson observed the emphasis on providing students with synonyms in German was excellent.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good provision for German in the school and school management is to be highly commended for reintroducing German into the curriculum for the current first-year cohort.
- The current provision in TY is restricted due to resource issues. Students in TY who have taken German in Junior Cycle are placed in a class group with students who have French. This arrangement needs to be kept under review and if resources permit a distinct class group for German should be formed. In the absence of this it is of paramount importance that students of German in TY be given very regular written and aural work to complete.
- Whole-school summative assessment takes place on a regular basis and parents receive regular reports of their daughter's progress in German. Continuous assessment takes place in first year. It is recommended that assessment in German in all cases include an aural and oral component as it is very important that students know how they are progressing in these important skills which form part of all state examinations in German.
- German is well resourced. The German department comprises two teachers who are committed to continuous professional development. There are good activities to support the teaching and learning of German for example a recent school trip to Berlin.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject department planning is very good and it is clear that there is very good collaborative planning between members of the German department both on a formal and informal basis.
 - To build on the good planning practices observed it is recommended that the learning outcomes be specified in the subject plan, an analysis of data from the state examination results should be maintained in the folder and strategies for developing AfL practices be documented.
 - It is suggested an inventory be taken of resources on an annual basis to ensure resources are kept up-to-date and this should also be documented in the plan.
 - Subject department meetings are held on a regular basis and in line with good practice minutes of these meetings are kept. It is recommended that effective teaching methodologies be discussed at all such meetings and documented accordingly.
-

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges the value of this inspection report and is conscious of the recommendations contained in it. This school is committed to the promotion and development of excellence in the provision of German. The Board welcomes the main findings in the report which confirm that:

- the quality of teaching & learning is very good
- the use of the target language in lessons is very good
- a variety of effective methodologies is used to develop communicative competence in the learners
- the classroom atmosphere is conducive to effective learning
- the print rich environment in classrooms is highly commended
- the quality of subject department planning and lesson planning is very good
- the whole-school support for teaching and learning of German is very positive

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The German department, as part of its on-going planning practices, will consider the various recommendations made.