

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Coláiste Choilm
Ballincollig, County Cork
Roll number: 71103K**

Date of inspection: 15 April 2011



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

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN FRENCH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	13, 14 and 15 April 2011
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 nine class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teaching and learning in lessons observed was generally very good with some excellent practice evident.
- There was evidence of significant use of the target language in lessons observed.
- Teacher-student rapport and levels of student engagement were very positive.
- Up-take of higher level and levels of achievement in certificate examinations generally are consistently strong.
- There is very good whole-school and departmental support for the subject.
- The French department works with commitment and enthusiasm.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The French department is encouraged to formalise its system of assessment of students' oral competence.
 - Consideration should be given to the making of an application for the services of a French language assistant.
 - An opportunity exists to introduce an element of self-evaluation and to promote the sharing of good practice at departmental level.
 - The French department is encouraged to develop an action plan for the subject.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Choilm is a post-primary school under the auspices of County Cork Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Gaelcholáiste Choilm operates as an Aonad Lán Ghaelach within the school. Currently the total enrolment in the school is 1,326. French is a core subject in the Gaelcholáiste and an optional subject in the main school. 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- All lessons were well prepared; content was appropriate and had been selected with a view to maximising students' engagement. Lesson pace was best supported where teachers had not been over-ambitious with regard to the amount of content selected.
- Lesson objectives were outlined. The additional benefits of expressing these objectives as learning goals for students were discussed.
- Cultural and language awareness were developed as part of lessons. Attention was paid to the integration of the various language skills. The importance of the incremental development of these skills in students was discussed with teachers.
- There was consistent use of the target language in lessons observed. Students demonstrated a good and established understanding of French and a willingness to communicate in the target language. It was recommended that in lessons an emphasis be put on the acquisition of linguistic structures.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was integrated to support learning. The importance of using aural material to support the acquisition of accurate pronunciation and intonation at junior cycle in particular was underlined.
- There was evidence of the skilful use of a variety of methodologies to support effective learning. Attention to differentiation in senior cycle mixed-ability classes was praised.
- Classroom management was very good, facilitated by very good teacher-student rapport. Students were kept on task and questions were used to support, check and extend their understanding. Teachers were encouraged to use open questions and 'wait time' in greater measure.
- Homework was assigned. Observation of students' work showed that work is routinely assigned and monitored. There was good awareness of, and preparation for, examinations and very good levels of achievement in certificate examination were noted. Students' oral competence is assessed but there is scope to formalise both the assessment and reporting of this competence.
- Students' literacy was supported through the use of grammatical terminology; student note-making; the provision of alternatives in the target language as opposed to that of a direct translation; visual supports and the encouragement of student questions.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- French is one of a significant number of modern languages offered in the school. Whilst most students study either French or German it is possible for students to study both languages. French is offered ab initio to Transition Year (TY) students who have not studied the language at junior cycle. It was suggested that consideration be given as to how to certify this module so as to encourage and allow for future acquisition of the language.
- Access to the language as part of the core curriculum is school dependent but this is kept under review by management.
- The allocation of time to the subject is good. However, the provision of French as an option in the main school results in the timetabling of double lessons and in a distribution of time which means that students' contact with the language is concentrated and less frequent than where it is provided as core. The school has, and intends, to keep this under review.
- A very good range of co-curricular and extracurricular activities is provided; of particular note is the school exchange with Vernon.
- Members of the French department are committed to the teaching and learning of the subject and to teacher professional development. It was recommended that the school re-apply for the services of a French language assistant.
- Senior management is well informed in relation to the subject. School systems and structures enable and support subject provision.
- The subject is well resourced; classrooms are well equipped and the designation of a French room has enhanced subject provision. The on-going acquisition of resources is encouraged and should facilitate support for the both able and the more challenged student.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The evaluation provided much evidence of policy development and planning.
- In line with best practice, the school has developed a policy for modern languages including Irish. The policy could be enhanced by the development of sections on assessment, review and evaluation.
- The French department has developed year-specific plans. It was suggested that these plans should make greater reference to syllabus documents and include sections on literacy and numeracy and evaluation.
- Thorough preparation of lessons was thoughtful and had included the selection and development of a wide range of resources. These resources clearly supported the

development of cultural awareness and the inclusion of authentic material drawn from current affairs added to the immediate relevance of lessons for students.

- It was suggested that departmental collaboration should now focus on the sharing of good practice and on self-evaluation and that an action plan for the development of subject provision generally also be devised.

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.