

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Gaelcholáiste na Mara
Arklow, County Wicklow
Roll number: 76106S**

Date of inspection: 18 October 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 FRENCH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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| Date of inspection | 18 October 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 quality of teaching and learning was generally good in the lessons observed.
- The target language was used consistently by the teacher in all of the lessons observed.
- A variety of methodologies was observed, some of which were more effective than others in promoting active learning.
- There is very good whole school provision and support for French.
- There was very conscientious subject planning and preparation of work for the lessons evaluated.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A more integrated approach to teaching giving due attention to all of the language skills should be adopted.
 - A better balance should be maintained between the consolidation of previous learning and the significant progression of new learning in order to ensure that students are sufficiently challenged in terms of their overall knowledge and skills transfer.
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INTRODUCTION

Gaelcholáiste Na Mara is an Irish medium co-educational secondary school with 175 students. The school is under the auspices of Kildare and Wicklow Education Training Board. It has a broad socio-economic catchment with students coming from the town of Arklow and its hinterland. The study of French is mandatory in both junior and senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- A number of good practices including the very conscientious preparation of work and the choice of methodologies were observed in all of the lessons evaluated. Areas for development include greater integration of the different language skills and ensuring a more appropriate balance between the consolidation of previous learning and the progression of new learning.
- French was used as the language of instruction throughout all of the lessons observed and this is very good practice. Students were also encouraged to respond to questions in French. This good practice should be further developed by giving the students the necessary expressions to ask questions, express difficulties and make requests in the target language and by affording them more opportunities for such interaction during the lesson.
- The lesson plan was communicated to the students at the beginning of each lesson. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that the plan be communicated in terms of what the students should know or be able to do by the end of the lesson. This should make students more aware of their roles and responsibilities in the learning process.
- The topic approach, as observed in some lessons, resulted in the good integration of aural and oral skills development. It is recommended that this practice be further extended to include due attention to reading comprehension and writing skills development. An integrated approach to developing all the language skills will best support knowledge and skills transfer across topics.
- The teaching of grammar was well integrated into some lessons, but in one instance was taught as a discrete skill for the entire lesson. In this instance learning would have been enhanced had the teaching of grammar been integrated into general skills development. In this skills development a grammar rule is identified within the context of a listening or reading text, is explained, and is then practised through oral and writing skills usage.
- Methodologies were varied for the purpose of maintaining student engagement and promoting active learning and this is good practice. Question and answer sessions were observed in all lessons. Visual supports were used to support comprehension in some instances and the presence of a language assistant further supported the work of the lesson. A game to enhance the enjoyment of language learning was noted in one lesson. Supplementary worksheets were provided in most lessons to reinforce learning and this is good practice.
- A strong focus in the lessons observed was on the consolidation of previous learning rather than on integrating new information. A better balance, integrating previous learning into new contexts and thereby promoting knowledge and skills transfer, is recommended in order to ensure that students are sufficiently challenged in terms of their overall language learning development.

- Pair or group work was observed in some lessons and this is good practice in promoting active learning. In some instances students engaged well with the activity and were observed to practice their oral skills. There was one instance where a placemat activity was used for the purpose of learning vocabulary. However, the nature of the activity limited the benefits of a useful group based strategy. It is recommended that this strategy be used for the purpose of affording students opportunities to express individual ideas in the target language and then to share them orally and in writing as a group.
- All pair or group activities should have a clear purpose and necessitate interaction among students. Furthermore, teachers should not hesitate to make clear demands of students in terms of their active involvement in such work and maximising the opportunity for improving their oral skills.
- A positive learning environment prevailed throughout. All students were very well behaved. Some however, were passive; they completed the tasks assigned but did not maximise opportunities for extending their learning. While some students responded well to the inspector's questions, many were less willing to communicate orally. The use of approaches that make greater demands on students to be actively involved in their own learning and to improve their communicative confidence should be considered.
- An inspection of copybooks indicated that homework was given and corrected with formative comments included. This is good practice. In-house examinations include an oral assessment and students sit the optional Junior Certificate oral examination. These are also good practices. There is good uptake of higher level in the State examinations.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school provision and support for French in the allocation of time, in timetabling and in the provision of resources.
- There is a designated classroom for the teaching of French. An attractive language learning environment has been developed with displays of posters, useful expressions and samples of students' work. Consideration could be given to extending the displays of classroom language or posting up expressions for the week or topic and creating opportunities for students to use them during lessons.
- All opportunities for ongoing professional development should be considered for the purpose of building up contacts with other teachers of French and sharing best practice. These include the scholarship schemes available for teachers of French, attendance at subject association meetings and seminars and relevant in-service programmes available in local education centres.
- The school's strong commitment to languages is evident in the range of co-curricular activities, including an annual exchange with a French school.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Considerable work has been completed in subject development planning including the development of schemes of work for each year group.
- When reviewing the schemes of work it is recommended that only the methodologies appropriate to the topic and level of the class group are included in the documentation.

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

Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board is a patron of Gaelcholáiste na Mara and as a sub-committee of that Board the school's board of management wishes to accept the French inspection that was carried out in the school on the 18th October 2013.

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

- A more integrated approach will be taken to tuition, which will pay due regard to all language skills.
- A balance will be achieved between the consolidation of learning that occurred previously and the promotion of new learning.