

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of German
REPORT**

**Newtown School, Newtown Road,
Waterford City, County Waterford
Roll number: 65010R**

Date of inspection: 12 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	12 December 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• 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, deputy principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- Some aspects of good quality teaching were noted in the course of lesson observation and teacher use of the target language was very good in all lessons.
- The classroom atmosphere in all lessons was very good and there was a very good rapport between teacher and students.
- There is considerable scope for development in the quality of subject department planning and individual lesson planning
- There is good whole-school support for German.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A stronger focus on the development of formal listening comprehensions skills needs to be an integral part of junior cycle lessons in German.
- It is recommended that AfL strategies be used more in lessons and that clear intended learning outcomes be communicated at the beginning of lessons.
- It is recommended that subject department planning and individual lessons planning be developed comprehensively to include a focus on intended learning outcomes in terms of the four skills of language acquisition.

INTRODUCTION

Newtown School is a co-educational voluntary secondary school guided by a Quaker ethos, which provides for boarders and day students. The school's current enrolment is 282. The school provides the Junior Certificate, the Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Some aspects of good quality teaching were observed during the lessons visited and teacher use of the target language was very good. Student use of the target language was also good in most cases.
- Elements of good practice were noted where senior cycle students were asked to predict answers in advance of a listening task. This is an effective pre-listening strategy. Students would have benefited further if they were provided with some of the key words and phrases that they were about to hear. A follow up post-listening strategy should also be used to consolidate learning.
- Formal aural comprehension tasks were used in a senior cycle lesson through the use of a "you tube" video clip which was of interest to the learners. However, the poor sound quality rendered the task too difficult for most of the students and the successful completion of the task was limited. It is recommended that sound quality of such materials be checked in advance of lessons.
- Student engagement in tasks in the course of lessons was very good. It is recommended in the course of such tasks that students be encouraged to correct their own work and to analyse their own mistakes. It is recommended that teachers circulate during student activities and guide self-correction to ensure the best possible learning outcomes.
- Formal grammatical knowledge formed the basis of lesson content in a junior cycle lesson. Due to the complexity of the grammar rules and the stage of learning of the students the task assigned proved too difficult for the learners. It is recommended that when teaching grammatical structures, particularly in junior cycle, the teacher should limit on this occasion for example, lesson content to regular verbs and then to small groups of irregular verbs.
- The skill of listening comprehension needed to be further developed for junior cycle students. It is recommended that formal listening tasks, at an appropriate level, be included in all junior cycle lessons given the importance assigned to this in the certificate examinations.
- Good use was made of some of the strategies associated with AfL. Mini white boards were used to assess individual student learning and students also engaged in peer assessment. To build on this good practice, it is recommended that AfL strategies be used more in lessons and that clear intended learning outcomes be communicated at the beginning of lessons and the teacher should establish at the end of lessons that the intended learning outcomes have been achieved.
- Lesson content in all lessons was theme based in line with the requirements of the syllabus. In some instances students would have benefited from more key vocabulary and phrases being written on the board and consolidated at the end of lessons.
- The classroom atmosphere in all lessons was very good and student-teacher rapport was positive. Base classrooms are not available for students of German but some material to

support the teaching and learning of German was on display in the classrooms where the language is taught.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good support for German in the school and management is to be commended for maintaining German as part of the curriculum although student uptake is low. The possibility of a short taster programme in first year for modern languages could be considered as a strategy to encourage greater uptake.
- German is well provided for in terms of resources although it has not been possible to provide a base classroom for German. It is suggested that this be kept under review as the provision of a base classroom would benefit teachers and students alike.
- The German teacher has availed of a range of continuous professional development (CPD) under the auspices of the National Induction Programme for Teachers. However, there is also a need to avail of subject specific CPD through for example the *Gesellschaft der Deutschlehrer Irlands*, (the association of teachers of German), the Goethe Institute (teacher scholarship scheme), the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) and the Post-Primary Languages Initiative (PPLI). At school level it is suggested that as a support for new teachers, management should oversee a comprehensive induction programme that would include opportunities for peer observation across a range of subject areas.
- There is a whole-school assessment policy and students receive homework and regular summative assessments. Parents receive reports at the end of each term.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is significant scope for development in the quality of subject planning. It is recommended that specific learning outcomes, methodologies, AfL strategies and the arrangements for formative and summative assessment be included in the plan. An analysis of the state examination results should also be included. It is recommended that senior management review the subject department plan more closely to ensure that the areas for development are being addressed.
- Subject planning should be informed by the current structure of allocation of marks for the aural, oral, reading and written components of the certificate examinations.
- There was scope for development in the quality of planning for individual lessons. Intended learning outcomes should be formed on the basis of a defined amount of lesson content in terms of key vocabulary and phrases and how students will comprehend and produce these in aural, written and oral forms. Attention also needs to be paid as to how the intended learning outcomes will be consolidated and assessed in the course of and at the end of lessons.
- There is good collaboration between modern language teachers in the school and meetings take place very regularly both on a formal and informal basis. It is suggested that as part of school self-evaluation consideration should be given to peer collaborative review which would benefit teachers and students.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teacher 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 report reflects good teaching and learning taking place in a very good classroom atmosphere with very good use of the target language used in all lessons. The inspection process was a very useful exercise in seeking areas where these good foundations can be built upon to enhance the learning experience of the students.

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

Formal Listening skills have been integrated as a part of Junior Cycle lessons. AfL strategies are incorporated in all lessons.

The subject department planning is being developed to adopt the recommendations from this report