

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of French**  
**REPORT**

**Coláiste na Sceilge**  
**Caherciveen, County Kerry**  
**Roll number: 76068N**

**Date of inspection: 11 October 2012**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	11 October 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to very good in the lessons observed.
- There was very good use of French by teachers for classroom communication and instruction in all the lessons observed.
- A variety of learning activities was used successfully including games, pair work and small group work.
- Provision for languages is good and the subject is well-resourced.
- Very good work has been undertaken by the teachers in relation to subject planning and assessment practices.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The use of learning outcomes should be further developed as a way of monitoring and consolidating learning in lessons.
  - Attention should be paid to the planning and pacing of lessons in order to ensure that students derive maximum benefit from lesson activities.
  - Ways of further developing and supporting students in improving their pronunciation at junior cycle should be incorporated into lesson planning.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste na Sceilge is a co-educational school under the auspices of Kerry Education Service serving the educational needs of students from Caherciveen and the surrounding areas. It has a current enrolment of 522 students. The school offers a range of programmes including an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from fair to very good in the lessons observed with scope for development in the area of lesson management in a minority of lessons.
- There was very good use of French for classroom communication and for teaching purposes. This is good practice as students become accustomed to hearing the language spoken and so develop confidence in speaking it themselves.
- Intended learning outcomes were shared with students at the start of lessons and noted on special whiteboards. While there was good consolidation of learning evident in some lessons, this practice should be extended and learning outcomes evaluated with students at the end of lessons.
- Where very good practice was in evidence, lessons were well-structured and paced. Instructions for activities were clear and there was modelling of language use by the teacher before students worked together in groups or independently. Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively to support students' learning. The students were provided with opportunities to share their ideas, and time was given by the teacher to monitoring students' progress and to developing their understanding.
- Where practice was observed to be less good, the lesson was overambitious in terms of the content planned, and the pace was too fast. As a result, the transition between one activity and the next was not smooth, and students were not always able to keep up with the pace. This led to a lack of clarity for the learner who did not have an opportunity to engage fully or to benefit from the lesson activities. It is recommended that greater attention be paid to these areas of lesson management and to the monitoring of student learning during the lesson especially during listening exercises. Sufficient time should be allowed to enable students to successfully complete a task before progressing to the next activity. The provision of adequate time would ensure that instructions for an activity are understood and that all students are on task.
- As the spelling and pronunciation of certain words and sounds by students was sometimes poor in some lessons, it is recommended that ways of helping students in junior cycle to develop habits of good pronunciation be considered. Focusing attention on these areas from the start of their language learning would help students to develop an appropriate level of accuracy and fluency more quickly. Suitable activities might include pronunciation practice and drills, games, the exploitation of listening material for pronunciation purposes and the inclusion of an oral in the assessment modes for junior cycle classes.
- It was very positive to see the emphasis on active learning methodologies in all lessons with games used as a warm-up activity or to bring out the fun element in the practice of grammar constructions. There were examples observed of pair or small-group work in all lessons with students invited to match up nouns and verbs or pictures of objects and

descriptions. Such practices helped to motivate students and to support their learning and engagement.

- Arrangements for homework and assessment are well developed in French. Continuous assessment forms an important part of the policy. Of particular note also is the incorporation of Assessment for Learning (AfL) techniques such as comment-only marking for students in non-examination year classes. This represents very good practice.
- The teachers had high expectations for their students who received affirmation and praise for their efforts. The students were well-behaved and co-operative at all times, and showed interest in and enthusiasm for learning French.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- There is good provision for modern foreign languages in Coláiste na Sceilge. The study of either French or German is mandatory in junior cycle and the uptake of languages in senior cycle is very high.
- Timetabling provision for the subject is satisfactory with single periods throughout junior cycle which is good practice. Resources for the subject are good and include data projectors and internet access in every classroom.
- Co-curricular and extracurricular support for the language is very good and includes collaboration with other subject departments. The teachers organise an annual *Journée Française* involving the participation of the whole staff as well as the involvement of the wider community through links with local French businesses. Students' language skills and cultural awareness are also developed through lunchtime oral groups and a *séjour linguistique* in Montpellier.
- The teachers have designated classrooms which have been decorated with colourful displays of posters, key words, photographs, items of clothing, and samples of students' work. It is suggested that further extending these displays to include materials specifically aimed at supporting senior cycle students' learning be considered.
- The teachers of French are committed to their on-going professional development. Their commitment, and the energy they bring to their teaching is acknowledged, while their attendance at professional development events is supported and facilitated by school management and by Kerry Education Service, where possible.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A comprehensive subject file has been prepared with relevant policies, plans and details of resources as well as evidence of long-term planning and annual review by the subject department. The subject plans written *en français* are especially commended.
- It is good to note that among the general aims listed for the subject is the development of students' enthusiasm and enjoyment in appreciating and learning French. Suggestions for how this aim might be achieved are outlined in the description of active methodologies for use with students that forms an important part of the subject file.
- Overall, student achievement in the certificate examinations is very good. An analysis of achievement is carried out annually by senior management, and the results are used to inform subject planning and as a tool for self-evaluation by the subject department.

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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 of the school 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**

We are generally happy with the content of the report which is predominantly positive: very good use of French in class, successful use of a variety of active learning methodologies, very good work on subject planning and assessment, the sharing of learning outcomes with enthusiastic students, very good co-curricular and extra curricular support and the acknowledgment that student achievement in the certificate examinations is very good.

We also acknowledge the constructive commentary and suggestions re the evaluation of learning outcomes with students, the pacing of lessons and suggestions re improving pronunciation.

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

We have met to discuss the report and teachers have begun to evaluate learning outcomes with students, are focusing on improving student pronunciation through drills at JC and one to one oral practice at senior level. We have also applied for a French Assistant for 2013/14 and the French Department are considering entering our students for the French Oral Examination at J. C.

As part of our policy for improving teaching and learning at CnS the report will be discussed by staff in a co-operative learning setting at the earliest opportunity.