

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of French
REPORT

Loreto High School
Beaufort, Rathfarnham, Dublin 14
Roll number: 60340N

Date of inspection: 14 September 2011



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

Dates of inspection	13 and 14 September 2011
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The standard of teaching and learning was very good in most of the lessons observed.
- French was used by the teachers as the language of instruction in all lessons.
- A range of methodologies was used to very good effect in most lessons.
- Very good work has been carried out by school management and language teachers to promote the study of modern languages.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should ensure that due importance is attributed to developing all of the language skills.
 - In order to ensure active learning throughout, the inclusion of at least one pair or group activity necessitating use of the target language is recommended.
 - Future subject planning should focus on developing strategies to facilitate effective self-evaluation.
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INTRODUCTION

Loreto High School Beaufort is a voluntary secondary school with 618 female students. It is a fee-paying school serving an urban catchment area in south County Dublin. The study of modern European languages forms part of the school's core curriculum.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teachers used French as the language of instruction throughout all lessons observed. Furthermore, some students were observed to interact in French when working together on a common worksheet while others interacted spontaneously in French during the lesson. The good practice of facilitating peer interaction in French should be further encouraged. To this end, the display of classroom language posters is recommended. Good attention to student use of the French alphabet for spellings was also noted.
- Most lessons were well structured and paced. In many instances the lesson plan was shared with the students. This good practice should be extended to all lessons and framed in terms of what the students should know by the end of the lesson, thereby making students more aware of their responsibilities in the language learning process. Attention to the learning outcomes will also help teachers in lessons where there was a need to maintain a better balance between the consolidation of previous work and the progression of new learning.
- The topic approach was used in most lessons thereby facilitating effective integration of the different language skills. Good practice was noted in one lesson where work on aural skills development included an effective preparatory phase. The seamless integration of grammar into the body of some lessons was also noted. Teachers should, however, ensure that due importance is attributed to developing all of the language skills. Some work on written skills development should be completed during the lesson, rather than always as a home-work assignment.
- A range of effective methodologies was observed. The use of brainstorming in one lesson extended the students' range of vocabulary and engaged them actively from the outset. This good practice should be extended to all lessons, where it can be used as either an individual or a group activity. ICT was well used for both presentational purposes and to support the teaching of grammar. The use of a song in one lesson helped students to learn the alphabet in both a meaningful and enjoyable manner.
- Active learning was promoted in many lessons through the use of pair or group work. It was most successful in instances where students had to interact with each other and then talk about their partner. In some lessons, however, students were assigned a paired task, but completed it in silence. When devising pair or group activities, teachers should ensure that the assigned tasks necessitate interaction in the target language. Some teachers supported the student-based tasks by providing them with key expressions in advance. While this approach is laudable for the purpose of advancing the work of the lesson, it is recommended that a differentiated approach be adopted, where the higher-ability students are challenged to come up with their own expressions. All lessons should include at least one short group activity to encourage active learning and oral skills development.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons and a review of copies indicated that work was corrected and a comment included. However, alternative assignments to translation are recommended in order to afford students opportunities for using language in different ways and in a wider variety of contexts. A whole-class approach to the correction of

common errors was noted in one lesson and this good practice should be extended to all lessons. A review of results in the certificate examinations indicates very good uptake of higher level and attainment appropriate to the student cohort.

- A positive learning environment prevailed throughout. Students were very well-behaved and applied themselves to their work. Their responses indicated good engagement with the work in hand. When interacting with the inspector most students revealed themselves to be confident and competent learners of the language.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Loreto High School has been very pro-active in promoting the study of modern European languages. French, German and Spanish are offered and the opportunity to study two languages is actively supported. The promotion of modern languages is further underpinned by the range of co-curricular activities provided for the students.
- There is appropriate allocation of time for French. However, it is recommended that school management explore ways whereby French in junior cycle is timetabled in single periods to support more regular contact with the language.
- The teacher-based classrooms have facilitated the creation of a language learning environment. As the year progresses, teachers should further extend the print-rich environment to include new classroom language and key expressions as different topics are studied.
- There is good commitment to continuing professional development by teachers and school management.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning is ongoing in Loreto High School. There is a subject co-ordinator, a position which is currently a post of responsibility. It is recommended that school management pursue further the possibility of operating the position of subject co-ordinator on a rotating basis outside of the post of responsibility structure. This would afford all teachers the opportunity to develop subject specific expertise and to take ownership of the subject planning process. Minutes are kept of all meetings in line with good practice.
- Considerable work has been carried out in subject planning with the compilation of detailed schemes of work for each year group in junior cycle and a broad outline of the topics and work to be covered at senior cycle. This good work should be further progressed to document a series of global outcomes in terms of the topic, outcome, methodologies and assessment protocols for each year group. The focus of future subject planning should be on facilitating self-evaluation with a view to further enhancing the teaching and learning of French.
- There was good individual preparation for all the lessons observed. Technical equipment was made ready in advance and the range of resources and supplementary worksheets supported the students in their work.
- An examination of the Transition Year (TY) plan indicates a need for greater detail in relation to the proposed teaching methodologies to ensure that they are in accordance

with the curriculum principles as set out in the document *Transition Year Programmes: Guidelines for Schools* (Department of Education and Science: 1995).

- Given the time of year, the assessment and recording of students' work is still in its early stages. However, as the year progresses teachers should keep a record of both homework assignments and tests in order to effectively track students' progress.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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