

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

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

**Ardcoil na nDeise**  
**Dungarvan, County Waterford**  
**Roll number: 64900W**

**Date of inspection: 28 March 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(s) of inspection</b>	28 March 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 five 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 was good or very good in the majority of lessons while there was scope for development in others.
- There was varied use of the target language in the lessons observed.
- A variety of methodologies was observed and effective use of these methodologies resulted in good learning.
- Learning was most effective where students were active participants in the work of the lesson and were enabled to interact in the target language.
- There is very good whole school support for the study of modern languages.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should extend their use of French as the language of instruction and communication.
  - Teachers should adopt a more integrated approach to the development of the different language skills and use a wider range of resources to support student learning in the classroom.
  - The Transition Year (TY) programme for French should be reviewed to ensure that all activities are appropriately structured, have clear language learning outcomes and that student progress is regularly assessed.
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## INTRODUCTION

Ardcoil na nDeise is a voluntary secondary school with 326 female students. It serves the town of Dungarvan and its hinterland. The school offers three programmes, Junior Certificate, Transition Year and the Leaving Certificate. The study of a modern European language is mandatory throughout the school.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There was varied use of the target language in the lessons observed. Good practice was noted where French was used consistently as the language of instruction. However, there were some instances where the teachers reverted back to English as the lesson progressed or translated too readily when students did not understand. All teachers should endeavour to communicate in the target language throughout the lesson and to use alternative strategies to translation as a means of scaffolding students' comprehension.
- Students' use of the target language should be built up by giving them the necessary strategies to interact in simple French. A number of key expressions are posted up on the walls to support them in their efforts. Key expressions could also be included on the cover of their copybooks, where they would be readily accessible.
- The lesson plan was outlined in terms of the curricular content to be covered. It is recommended that the good practice of sharing the lesson plan be extended by reframing it in terms of the proposed learning outcomes to be achieved. The outcomes should then be revisited at the end of the lesson.
- The integrated approach observed in some lessons was effective in promoting all the language skills. There were also some very good examples of grammar integrated into the body of the lesson. These practices should be extended throughout and due attention given to the development of all the language skills.
- Some lessons concentrated on oral examination practice which was appropriate for the time of year. Others focused on the correction of mock examination papers. While this is a necessary stage in learning, consideration should be given to adopting a more integrated approach where the correction of errors contributes to learning across the different language skills.
- A range of up-to-date materials is available to teachers. However, these were not used in the lessons observed; teachers relied mainly on the textbook or examination papers. To further enhance the quality and enjoyment of language learning, teachers should supplement core materials with authentic reading, visual and audio materials sourced from the internet ([www.french.ie](http://www.french.ie)) or relevant French media.
- Song with a supporting video was used to good effect in one lesson. Information and communication technology (ICT) was integrated into the work of another lesson. However, the use of ICT was not for specific language acquisition purposes, but for students to download information for their French-related projects. Teachers should explore the varied uses of ICT as a tool for teaching and learning and integrate it more fully into lessons.
- Students in a TY lesson were afforded the opportunity to work individually on projects. While independent learning is a valued component of a TY programme, there is a need to intersperse individual student work with whole-class instruction to ensure purposeful

language learning outcomes. Furthermore, it is recommended that a significant proportion of project work be completed in French in order to enhance students' language skills.

- Good practice was noted in many lessons where students worked in pairs. However, there were some instances where the purpose of the paired tasks was not sufficiently clear. If pair or group work is to facilitate students helping each other they should be informed that they can choose to work individually or in pairs. If it is for the purpose of oral skills development, the task must necessitate interaction.
- Homework was given and corrected in most instances. All students, including those in TY should be given opportunities to progress their language learning through regular homework assignments and formative feedback on work completed.
- All students were well behaved and applied themselves to the work of the lesson. Learning was most effective where they were active, engaging with each other as well as with the teacher. Many of their responses indicated competent and confident communication in the target language. This was less evident in lessons where there was more limited use of the target language.

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

- There is very good whole-school provision and support for modern languages in the allocation of time, timetabling and access to resources, including ICT.
- Classrooms are student based, thereby limiting the opportunity for the creation of an extensive language learning environment. However, teachers have created a language corner on one of the corridors for the display of French posters and projects. There is also an extensive display of French posters in the school's language laboratory. These are good practices.
- As part of ongoing professional development teachers should inform themselves of the French scholarships, in-service courses and seminars provided to support linguistic and pedagogical development.
- Good practice was noted in the development of a pen-pal programme with a French school. This should be further developed to include inter-school projects such as the exchange of resources and the use of Skype for oral interaction.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Structures are in place to support effective subject planning and there is a strong emphasis on working collaboratively as a subject department. Meetings are facilitated and minutes are kept. Meetings should maintain a balance between strategic planning for the future of French in the school and issues of a more practical nature.
- To further the work already completed in developing the permanent section of the subject plan, the members of the French department should establish the learning outcomes for each year group in terms of transferable skills. Work schemes should indicate the topic, the learning outcomes, the proposed methodologies, the resources and assessment protocols for the lesson. This will assist teachers in evaluating their work at the end of each year and to amend their plans accordingly.

- The TY plan requires significantly more detail regarding the structure and organisation of the topics and activities selected, the language learning outcomes and the methodologies used.
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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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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