

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of French
REPORT

Mc Egan College
Macroom, County Cork
Roll number: 71030J

Date of inspection: 26 January 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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	26 January 2012
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 and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was commendable.
- The target language was used in most lessons observed.
- Class size, a well-appointed classroom and teacher knowledge and concern supported student engagement in lessons.
- French is part of the core curriculum at junior cycle and all students are encouraged and supported to take the subject.
- Regular assessment is a strength of provision as is the emphasis on the assessment of students' oral competence at senior cycle.
- All lessons were well planned and prepared.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers are encouraged to identify and share learning outcomes in all lessons.
 - Maximum use should be made of the target language for the purposes of classroom communication.
 - Consideration should be given to the value of introducing the assessment of student's oral competence at junior cycle.
 - A plan should be made for the long-term development of the subject.
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INTRODUCTION

Mc Egan College is a mixed post-primary school under the auspices of County Cork Vocational Education Committee (VEC). The school has a current enrolment of 196 and is involved in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in School (DEIS) action plan. French is offered across a wide range of programmes including Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was commendable.
- Lesson content selected was appropriate to the year group concerned. Where classes included both higher and ordinary level students, it was clear that consideration had been given to the selection of lesson content with both groups in mind. It was advised that learning outcomes should be identified and that they should be shared and reviewed with students at the start and conclusion of lessons.
- The target language was used in most lessons. Students were encouraged and supported to learn vocabulary relevant to the lessons. The provision of alternatives in the target language supported language development. The importance of the use of the target language as both the medium of instruction and of transactional communication in the classroom was discussed. Oral starts to lessons were encouraged. It was also advised that every effort be made to maximise the use of French for classroom interaction from first year by the teaching and practice of some key transactional phrases in the target language. The importance of the teaching and acquisition of linguistic structures rather than vocabulary in isolation was discussed.
- A range of methodologies was used in lessons observed. The use of pair and group work, the requirement that students ask as well as answer questions and the inclusion of a game in one lesson promoted student oral production. Pair work and independent learning were encouraged, and skilfully included, in working with classes with both higher and ordinary level students.
- All lessons included attention to both listening and writing. The importance of the use of authentic auditory material to support language acquisition, in junior classes in particular, was discussed. It was also advised that the approach taken to listening comprehension should support the development of global listening skills.
- Student-teacher rapport was very good. It was evident that class size, teachers' awareness of, and concern for their students, and teacher humour all promoted effective student engagement.
- Much attention was paid to both the assigning and correcting of homework. Very effective use was made of peer-assessment. Where relevant, it was clear that work was being assigned and corrected with an informed examination focus.
- The development of student literacy was supported by the attention to vocabulary, accuracy in writing and oral work, and by the use of visual displays and key words. The use of numbers in a junior cycle lesson supported the development of numeracy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- French was made part of the core curriculum at junior cycle in 2007 and the commitment to the provision of this subject has remained despite staffing constraints. All students are encouraged to study French in junior cycle. Decisions to make exceptions are made on an individual basis and with parental involvement, which is very positive.
- Timetable allocation to the subject is generally very good. In this current year, it was necessary to allocate two periods to one year group in the same day. It was explained that this is unlikely to reoccur.
- The French department is led by a teacher who is personally and professional committed to the subject and generous in her support of temporary members of the department. It was advised that the school re-apply for the services of a French language assistant as this would support students and the French teacher in their work. It would also be very beneficial to consider the possibilities offered by Department schemes such as the French/Irish Teacher Professional Visits scheme, outlined in Circular 0028/10, and the summer scholarship scheme jointly organised with the French Cultural Services.
- The French teacher is classroom-based and this has allowed the creation of a very supportive classroom environment. It has also facilitated the teacher in the structuring and organisation of her work which are strengths of the approach she employs. Resources are made available to the subject and provision has been enhanced by the recent installation of information and communications technology (ICT) equipment. It was advised that the French department should endeavour to build its stock of student resources.
- Co-curricular supports include the organisation of attendance at a French theatre event. It is very positive to see the school's involvement in University College Cork's Access programme. Good use has been made of this involvement to encourage the development of cultural awareness in first-year students. Mc Egan College had a link with a French school in times past. Consideration should be given to re-activating this link, or to the establishment of an e-twinning arrangement with a French school.
- The school has a clear assessment policy, and frequent assessment of student's progress is supported by regular communication with parents. The emphasis put on the assessment of students' oral competence in senior cycle is commendable. It was advised that this good practice should also be part of teaching and learning in junior cycle.
- The school monitors achievement in certificate examinations. Students generally achieve well at their chosen level. It was advised that uptake of ordinary level junior certificate be carefully monitored to ensure that all students capable of taking higher level are encouraged to do so.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A subject department plan has been devised. Meetings are held and records maintained. It was suggested that year plans be syllabus referenced and that an integrated, revised layout be adopted. The capacity of a thematic approach to support the integration of skills and a focus on pedagogy was discussed. The plan for LCA French should also be included in the subject department folder.

- All lessons observed had been well planned and prepared. Preparation had included the sourcing of relevant materials and the development of worksheets.
- In order to support the ongoing development of subject provision, it is suggested that a plan for the long-term development of the subject be devised.

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.