

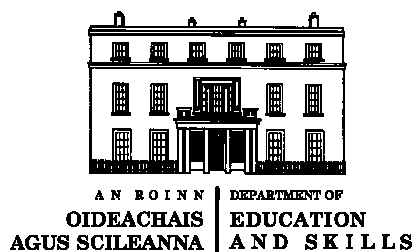
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of French  
REPORT**

**Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge  
Baile Gunnair, Contae Phort Láirge  
Roll number: 68078U**

**Date of inspection: 5 May 2016**



# **REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN FRENCH**

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## **INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	5 May 2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teacher</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teacher</li></ul>

## **MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was good or very good.
- The target language was used both for lesson delivery and classroom communication and lessons had also been planned so as to include opportunities for student use of the target language.
- Examination of examples of students' work supplied did not provide much evidence of the regular monitoring and provision of formative feedback to students on written work.
- To date, whilst levels of uptake of, and achievement at, junior certificate higher level generally are very satisfactory levels of achievement at the highest grade are less so.
- Overall, whole-school provision for the subject is very good.
- With the exception of planning for Transition Year (TY) French, to date subject planning generally has been at a fundamental level.

## **MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Departmental self-evaluation and reflection should focus on aspects of teaching and learning in junior cycle that could contribute to the raising of levels of achievement at the highest grade.
  - Opportunities for teacher professional development should be actively pursued.
  - The French department should devise its own three-year plan for the development and enhancement of subject provision.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Galecholáiste Phort Láirge is an all-Irish, co-educational, Catholic post-primary school located on the outskirts of Waterford city. The school, established in 2007, operates under the patronage of An Foras Pátrúnachta. It has a current enrolment of 116 students. It offers Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and an optional TY programme. French is one of two modern languages offered in the school.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was good or very good. This quality was underpinned by clear planning for the individual lessons concerned.
- Lesson content had been appropriately selected to respond to curricular and examination demands, as appropriate. In the fifth-year lesson, the reading comprehension exercise focused on a topic of direct relevance to the students, using an authentic document, which is very good practice.
- The target language was used extensively in the delivery of lessons and it was clear that lessons had been planned so to include the creation of opportunities for student use of the target language also.
- A number of the teaching and learning strategies employed supported this creation of opportunities for student use of French. These included the use of an oral game, pair work and a cooperative brainstorming exercise.
- The TY class was doing final preparation and revision for the Diplôme d'Études en Langue Française (DELF) examination. It is very good practice to undertake such a qualification in TY as its clearly structured curriculum provides a defined learning goal for students and gives them access to external certification which also offers possibilities for further study. Such a programme respects the opportunity provided by TY whilst underpinning preparation for the study of French at senior cycle. This is very good practice.
- Where a lesson observed was less effective than others, it was due primarily to a lower level of engagement on the part of some students. Lesson planning needs to be sufficiently flexible, and teacher awareness sufficiently acute, to ensure that all students are encouraged to have the required materials and to actively participate in the lesson.
- Language acquisition was supported by good use of the whiteboard and projection and by student note-making.
- Whilst homework was assigned in all lessons, an examination of student work presented provided little evidence of the regular monitoring and provision of formative feedback to students on their written work. Although it was accepted that the sample of student work presented may not have been entirely representative, the inspector did underline the fundamental importance of such practices, particularly in the early years of language acquisition and in order to support rigorous preparation for the achievement of the highest levels in written examinations.
- To date, the school has only entered students for Leaving Certificate French twice; therefore, it is not yet possible to discern reliable patterns of achievement. It has entered students for Junior Certificate on three occasions so it is possible to make some observations about patterns of uptake and achievement. Whilst levels of uptake of, and achievement at, junior certificate higher level generally are very satisfactory, levels of

achievement at the highest grade are less so. It is advised that departmental documents should include the school-based analysis of results and a related departmental reflection with a focus on how teaching and learning can be developed so as to support and increase levels of achievement at the highest grades. The French department is also well placed to consider how teaching and learning could be differentiated to challenge students and extend learning opportunities.

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

- Ambitiously for a small school, Gaelcholáiste Phort Láirge offers both French and Spanish. On entry to the school, students have a choice of language in the years in which intake permits the creation of two class groups. Otherwise, a class group is offered either French or Spanish. It is now school policy for students to continue their study of the chosen language at senior cycle.
- Allocation of time to the subject is in line with provision nationally.
- Although the school is still in temporary premises, the French department has been assigned a base classroom which is suitably equipped. Over time, departmental planning and planning for resources should include attention to how this facility could be maximised to support both the development of language acquisition and cultural awareness.
- To date, the French department has taken part in a school trip to France. It appreciates the learning opportunities that time spent in the target language country affords to students; all such opportunities should be encouraged.
- The French department is fortunate to be staffed by a native speaker of French. Professional reflection should consider how to maximise the benefits of such an invaluable resource. As this is a small school with small subject departments, it is advised that the French department pursue all relevant opportunities for teacher professional development and networking.
- Students in the school are assessed regularly, records are kept and reports provided to parents. Students are also encouraged to plan for and reflect on their learning goals. Currently, students are assessed orally as part of the DELF examination in TY. In order to support language acquisition, it is advised that the French department should plan for the gradual inclusion of the assessment of students' oral competence in other years also.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Planning for the lessons observed was very good. It had considered matters such as teaching objectives, learning outcomes, classroom activities, resources and homework.
- The French department prepared a generic plan for TY in 2014. The plan contains a number of very interesting elements such as student maintenance of weekly TY diary, weekly group presentations by students on French-related topics and the DELF qualification, as mentioned. As discussions with the French department revealed that not all of these elements are in fact covered in any one year, it is advised that the plan should include an annual teacher self-evaluation section and a consequent revision.
- As discussed in feedback following the inspection, basic planning for other year groups could be enhanced by moving beyond a listing of chapter headings.

- In order to incrementally enhance departmental provision for the subject, it is advised that the French department devise and commit to a three-year action plan for this purpose.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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**

## **Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The board of management, school management and the subject department welcome the recognition given to the good practice being used and the progress made in the French department in the school.

We understand the positive benefits of evaluation to support teaching and learning in the school and see that the school as a whole is the better for it.

We accept the recommendations of the evaluation and we see them as guidelines and encouragement to promote and develop French in the school and to strengthen the language as an important subject in the curriculum.

The staff, school management and the board of management have discussed, and will further discuss, the evaluation report so as to develop the French and other subject departments in the school.

## **Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

<b>1.</b> Departmental self-evaluation and reflection should focus on aspects of teaching and learning in junior cycle that could contribute to the raising of levels of achievement at the highest grade.	This year, there will be a whole-school emphasis on the objectives for teaching and learning as outlined in the school's SSE document. Copies will be corrected regularly with an emphasis on assessment for learning. The French department has analysed and evaluated examination results as part of planning for teaching and learning. Students will be assessed regularly and feedback provided as per the whole-school plan for the year.
<b>2.</b> To engage in continuing professional development	An in-service course will be undertaken. Registration with the Teachers Centre
<b>3.</b> To develop a three-year action plan for the development and enhancement of subject provision.	A three-year plan is being developed by the subject department so as to develop French in the school. The focus will be on: Student achievement in state examinations. The raising of student awareness in relation to the benefits of having competence in the language. The organisation of extra-curricular and cross-curricular events and activities by the subject department. A gradual increase in subject department resources. The board of management has made a budget available for this purpose.
<b>4.</b> To improve basic subject planning (except in the case of Transition Year)	Whole-school subject planning templates will be used for every year group and will be followed from term to term. Reference will be made to the syllabus rather than to chapter headings of a book. The required templates are available in the Teachers Handbook.
<b>5.</b> To undertake regular monitoring of students' work and the provision	Each teacher in the school is implementing Assessment for Learning as a key policy this year.

of feedback	
<b>6.</b> To strengthen linguistic competence	Students' oral competence to be tested in other year groups as well as in TY. Currently done in 6 <sup>th</sup> year but this will be extended to other year groups. An increase in the use of pair and group work in classes. Regular Pair tasks/conversations.
<b>7.</b> To undertake annual self-evaluation and review of the TY plan	The TY plan will be looked at, at the end of year, so as to ascertain what worked and did not work so as to always ensure the provision of an effective programme.
<b>8.</b> To maximise the benefits of having a native speaker of French	A link will be made with other subjects for example: French Cooking in Home Economics with the help of the French teacher; teaching and learning resources from France will be available/in use in the classroom; students will be made aware of French music and songs.

**(This is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management.)**