Subject Inspection of GERMAN
REPORT

Mount Mercy College
Model Farm Road, Cork
Roll number: 62661U

Date of inspection: 11 March 2015
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GERMAN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning of German was excellent and teacher use of the target language was very good.
- Student motivation and enjoyment in lessons were very evident as was teacher interest in and enthusiasm for the language.
- The quality of student learning is enhanced by the provision of an outstanding programme of extra-curricular activities.
- Management is very supportive of German, the subject is well resourced and the uptake of German is increasing.
- Teacher commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) is exemplary and the benefits of this commitment are very evident in the classroom.
- The quality of subject department planning is excellent and the strategic approach to promoting and sustaining German in the curriculum is proving highly effective.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The strategies associated with assessment for learning (AfL) should be used when correcting students’ written work.
- To build on the existing very good practice in relation to school self-evaluation, consideration should be given to engaging in peer collaborative review as outlined in the body of this report.
INTRODUCTION

Mount Mercy College is an all-girls post-primary school situated in Cork city. The school is under the trusteeship of the Catholic Education in Schools Trust. The current enrolment in the school is 802. The school offers the Transition Year (TY) programme which is compulsory. German is one of three modern languages on offer in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning as observed in the course of the evaluation was excellent.
- Teacher use of the target language was very effective in all lessons and students in senior cycle demonstrated very good competence in understanding and speaking German. These students’ oral skills were developed by the range of tasks, such as group work and pair work that were assigned to them by the teacher.
- Students in junior cycle showed very good understanding of German but needed more opportunities to speak German in the lesson observed. Junior cycle students should be provided with a variety of activities to enable them to use the target language on a regular basis.
- The content of all lessons was carefully chosen to reflect the theme-based nature of the syllabus being followed. Content was made meaningful for students through the use of interesting authentic materials and resources. Good continuity with prior learning was also evident.
- The pace of all lessons was most appropriate to the needs of the learners and there was swift movement from one task to the next. Student engagement was very good and students were on task at all times.
- Teacher enthusiasm and passion for the language were obvious in all lessons and these very important aspects served to motivate and instil a keen interest in German among the students.
- Information and communication technology was used very effectively to enhance student interest and learning. Short video clips were used to complement lessons. Students have contributed to making German videos and there is a German blog on the school website.
- Classroom management was excellent and learning activities were very well managed. Student behaviour and demeanour were exemplary at all times.
- Very high expectations were set for the learners in a most positive and supportive manner. Teacher disposition towards the learners set the tone for a most conducive learning environment and students responded very well.
- The learning environment was enhanced by the tremendous displays of student work and in particular by the exhibition of photographs of students engaged in activities related to the learning of German. The sense of student enjoyment and fun in learning permeated classrooms through these displays.
- Student written work was of a high quality and very well organised and is corrected very regularly. Consideration should be given to adopting the strategies of assessment for learning (AFL) when correcting students’ written work. Formative feedback will allow students to focus on where they need most to improve and how.
• A very good focus on the development of students’ literacy skills was evident in lessons and clear links with the school’s literacy plan were obvious.

• Student attainment and uptake at higher levels in the state examinations are very high and in keeping with the school context. Students have won international awards on the basis of their high achievements in German and the German department’s commitment to promoting the study of the language has been recognised with national awards.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

• The provision for German is very good. Timetabling is good and resourcing for the German department in terms of personnel and learning materials has been extremely well supported by senior management in the school. At the moment due to lack of space in the school it has not been possible to provide a base classroom for German. This situation should be kept under review.

• Under the current access arrangements one modern language is compulsory and German is optional. This effectively means that for all students German is available as a second modern language. It is suggested that consideration be given to offering all modern languages on an equal basis as it can be very difficult for second languages to survive as typically students only wish to study one modern language.

• Notwithstanding the current arrangements, the uptake of German has been increasing and the trend in junior cycle is now very positive. This is due in no small measure to the tremendous dedication and commitment of the German department to putting in place a strategic plan to increase the uptake of the subject.

• The range and variety of extracurricular activities to support the teaching and learning of German is outstanding and the huge time commitment for the teacher involved in the organisation of such a programme of activities is acknowledged.

• Teacher commitment to CPD is exemplary and the benefits of this commitment are very evident in the classroom.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

• The quality of subject department planning is excellent and it is evident that a huge amount of work goes into subject planning at many levels. The plan to promote and sustain German in the school is particularly worthy of mention and the effectiveness of this strategic plan is clearly evident in the success that German is experiencing.

• The plan for German in TY is very good and reflects the cross-curricular dimension of this programme very well.

• As part of the SSE processes the German department has prepared a comprehensive report on the subject which includes analysis of the state examination results. To build on the SSE practices in place consideration should be given to engaging in peer collaborative review where teachers could visit each other’s lessons with a view to sharing the excellent practice evident in the school.
The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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; a response was not received from the board.