

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

**Subject Inspection of German
REPORT**

**Coláiste Cholmcille,
Ballyshannon, County Donegal
Roll number: 91506V**

Date of inspection: 24 and 25 April 2013



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN GERMAN**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	24 + 25 April 2013
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed.
- Teacher use of the target language was very good but the use of the target language by students was limited in the course of the lessons observed.
- Effective methodologies based on the principles of Assessment for Learning (AfL) were used in the majority of lessons.
- Classroom management was very good and student-teacher rapport was very positive.
- The learning environment in the base classrooms contain very good displays of student work and other appropriate learning materials.
- Whole-school provision for German is very good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that students be given more opportunities to use German in the course of lessons, and in particular, to form complete sentences in the target language.
- It is recommended that formative feedback be written into students' copybooks so that the learners are clear on how and what to improve.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Cholmcille is a mixed post-primary school providing education for a cohort of 653 students. A comprehensive range of curricular programmes is on offer in the school including the Junior Certificate, the Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate. German is an optional subject and is offered in all curricular programmes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed.
- The use of the target language by the teachers was very good and most interactions in the course of lessons were conducted through the medium of German. Students would benefit greatly from more opportunities to use the target language, and especially to form complete sentences in German. This could be achieved by greater use of communicative teaching methodologies such as pair work and group work.
- An integrated approach to teaching the skills of language acquisition was noted in some lessons. Students were given tape scripts to read and given written tasks to perform based on the text. This integrated approach to listening, reading and writing is effective and helps to consolidate learning.
- Lesson content in all lessons was good and was theme based in line with the requirements of the syllabus.
- A number of methodologies in line with the principles of AfL were noted in most lessons. For example the proposed student learning outcomes were written on the board and students used the colours red, orange and green to indicate their levels of understanding of a particular topic in grammar. These and other AfL strategies could usefully be extended to all lessons.
- In most lessons good questions were posed to assess students' learning. It would be beneficial if more use was made of targeted questions rather than posing questions globally in class.
- A sample of students' copybooks was reviewed in the course of the inspection. In many cases the work in students' copybooks was very well organised and theme based. This attention to good organisation of work has a positive effect on learning outcomes.
- Students had completed a large volume of written assignments which had been corrected by teachers mainly by rewriting the correct forms of words and verbs. As this approach does not encourage students to work out mistakes in an independent manner, it is recommended that formative feedback be given to students in line with AfL strategies.
- A range of assessment practices were evident in the lessons. In some cases students were presented with assessment criteria and invited to self assess their written work. This is very good practice and could usefully be extended to all lessons.
- Classroom management was very good in all lessons observed. Student attendance was monitored appropriately and students were on task at all times.
- The learning environment was stimulating and a very good display of materials including student work was evident. This supported the teaching and learning of the subject in a positive manner.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for German is very good. There is good timetabling allocation for the language in all of the curricular programmes and there are two base classrooms provided.
- German is an optional subject and is available to all students enrolling in first year. There is mixed practice regarding the grouping of students in German classes in junior cycle. In second year the classes are streamed. It is recommended that all classes in junior cycle be created with a mixed-ability ethos.

- There is no whole-school assessment policy and common assessments are not set in German. It is recommended that this practice be reviewed and that common assessments be set in junior cycle.
- The management of the school provides appropriate resources for the subject and there is good Information and Communications Technology (ICT) infrastructure in the German classrooms.
- Members of the German department have availed of whole-staff continuous professional development (CPD) but not subject specific CPD in relation to modern language teaching. It is suggested that this be considered by the German department.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject plan for German is a work in progress and some good work has been completed to date. The content of the plan for German identified the themes for each year group and the student learning outcomes. However, as there was little information on the methodologies to be used to achieve the learning outcomes, it is recommended that these be included in the subject plan.
- Self evaluation and review are currently not practised in the German department to any great extent. The analysis of the state examination results is currently carried out by senior management in the school. It is recommended that this analysis be carried out annually by the German department. This analysis should be included in the subject plan. The website of the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) provides very useful tools and templates to aid with such analysis.
- There is no coordinator for the subject and there was no strong evidence of collaborative planning between members of the subject department. Minutes of subject meetings are not recorded. It is recommended that a collaborative approach to subject planning be adopted. It is also recommended that the senior management team in the school ensure that a more collaborative approach to subject planning take place, and that in line with best practice, minutes of meetings be recorded and the subject plan be finalised.
- The quality of short term planning and planning for individual lessons was good. In some cases a greater emphasis on planning for active student learning in the course of lessons would have yielded better results in terms of student learning outcomes.
- Good records of students' progress are kept and parents are kept informed of students' progress at regular intervals through school reports, parent teacher meetings and the school journal.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and one 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

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management acknowledges the professionalism of the inspection process and is pleased that the many strengths of Coláiste Cholmcille's German Department have been noted and outlined in the report.

The Board acknowledges the input of a member of staff in the development of a subject plan which is currently being used as the basis for future planning. Information on methodologies used is now documented and is being incorporated into this plan.

The senior management team collates the results for the state examinations and distributes same to the relevant subject teachers. This is done as a support measure for staff and is used by teachers to inform practice.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

In terms of collaborative planning, there is now an increased level of engagement in the process: a coordinator is in place and minutes of meetings are documented.