

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of GERMAN
REPORT

Saint Joseph's Secondary School
Rush, County Dublin
Roll number: 60343T

Date of inspection: 20 October 2015



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 GERMAN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	20 October 2015
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good and the effective focus on teaching methodologies associated with the principles of *assessment for learning* (AfL) was excellent.
- Student engagement in learning was very good and student motivation was enhanced by the use of song, information and communication technology (ICT) and opportunities to be creative in the course of lessons.
- Assessment practices are very good and teachers regularly provide students with effective written formative feedback.
- German is well provided for in the school, the uptake is increasing and there is an excellent range of co-curricular activities provided by teachers to enhance student learning.
- The whole-school focus on continuous professional development (CPD) and the commitment of the subject coordinator to participating in subject specific CPD in countries of the target language are paying significant dividends in the classroom.
- The whole-school structures in relation to subject planning are exemplary and the quality of the subject plan in German and of individual lesson planning is excellent.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- As a precursor to students' engagement in oral tasks, teachers should model questions and phrases in German in advance so as to scaffold student learning and enable students to complete oral tasks with greater success.
- At the end of oral tasks, a greater emphasis on consolidation of learning could take place and teachers should provide the students with dedicated pronunciation exercises to further enhance their effective communication in the target language.

INTRODUCTION

Saint Joseph's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school with an enrolment of 703 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme, the Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The school participates in the Delivering Equality in Our Schools (DEIS) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good with many examples of excellent practice. The use of practices related to *assessment for learning* (AfL) were very good.
- A very effective range of teaching methodologies was used to ensure a student centred approach to learning the language. Pair and group work was used in all lessons which served to maximise student learning.
- The quality of teacher use of the target language was exemplary and in line with syllabus guidelines. German was used throughout the lessons observed and student comprehension was very good indicating that it is common practice.
- The quality of student use of the target language was good. In relation to some of the oral tasks given to students, it is recommended that teachers model the required phrases and questions in German in advance to ensure that the learning is scaffolded. At the end of these tasks, learning should be consolidated and dedicated pronunciation tasks should be provided for the students.
- The classroom environment was very positive and attractive with a very good display of student work and appropriate learning materials. In one of the classrooms, the arrangement of tables and chairs in group settings, as opposed to the traditional layout in rows, facilitated very good opportunities to use a communicative approach to teaching German.
- Excellent practice was noted in relation to classroom routines particularly in relation to transitioning from one task to another; for example, whereby the teacher raised her hand to gain the students' attention. Following this, all students swiftly raised their hands to indicate their readiness to move to the next phase of the lesson.
- Excellent strategies to motivate students were in evidence in lessons where songs and games through ICT were used. It is also noteworthy that teachers provided students with significant opportunities to be creative. Student enjoyment of learning was obvious.
- Management of students was very good. Students were on task at all times and their behaviour was exemplary.
- Very good attention was paid to the development of literacy in all lessons particularly in relation to the enriching and extending students' vocabulary.
- Effective assessment practices were used constantly. Student work was very good and there was clear evidence that teachers providing formative feedback to students is common practice. Students' presentation of written work was also very good and a recent competition in relation to designing a copybook cover proved to be an excellent strategy in enhancing student pride in their work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for German is very good and the numbers of students taking German in junior cycle are increasing. A recent change in timetabling at whole-school level whereby lessons are now one-hour duration—as opposed to forty minutes—is proving successful.
- There is a very strong emphasis on CPD at whole-school level which is led most effectively by the principal. The benefits of this culture of availing of CPD are evident in the classroom practice. The co-ordinator of the German department has availed of a significant amount of subject specific CPD, in particular in countries of the target language. Her commitment to upskilling in the subject area is exemplary.
- A wide range of co-curricular activities is provided by the teachers to support the teaching and learning of German. Students have opportunities to go on trips, to take part in exchanges and a wide variety of other activities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The senior management team has developed very comprehensive structures to facilitate effective whole-school planning. A very good feature of this approach is that subject departments must complete a comprehensive check list in relation to whole-school planning such as the DEIS plan and school self-evaluation processes.
- The quality of subject department planning is very good and it is evident that there is great commitment to effective planning for the delivery of German. The links made in the subject plan to the overall DEIS plan are very effective and ensure great cohesion between subject planning and the DEIS targets.
- The very high quality of planning for the delivery of German in the context of the TY programme is noted. The planning for TY reveals all elements of best practice in relation to the programme with a particular emphasis on cross-curricular links. The focus on the ‘learning to learn’ aspect of TY is excellent, particularly in relation to the module where TY students plan and develop a course and teach it to sixth-class pupils in the local primary school.
- The quality of planning for individual lessons was excellent and the teachers planned very carefully to maximise the use of the extended lesson time of one hour. The quality of planning for the TY lesson was exemplary; the teacher had set out complex and detailed workstations in advance for students.

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 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.

Published May 2016

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 of St Joseph's Secondary School is heartened by the findings of this inspection report. The noting of good practice in relation to planning, CPD, teaching and learning is affirming of the board of management's vision for teaching and learning in the school.

The board is particularly gratified that the inspector noted and commented on the whole school structures in relation to subject planning.

The board congratulates the teachers of German for their professionalism and teamwork as described in the report.

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

The principal will work with the German department to ensure that the recommendations become targets for improvement in the coming year.