

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

**Subject Inspection of French**  
**REPORT**

**Loreto Secondary School**  
**Wexford**  
**Roll number: 63660A**

**Date of inspection: 19 November 2015**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	18 and 19 November 2015
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- High quality teaching and learning was observed in the majority of lessons evaluated.
- There was very good emphasis on the use of French by both the teacher and the students in the majority of lessons evaluated.
- A range of effective methodologies was observed in the majority of lessons resulting in positive student engagement and active learning.
- Student learning was less effective in those lessons where there was inconsistent use of the target language and insufficient clarity of purpose.
- A number of good assessment practices to support learning were observed.
- There is good whole-school provision and support for French.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The use of French as the language of instruction and communication should be extended to all lessons.
  - All classroom activities should be primarily for the purpose of extending students' communicative competence in the language.
  - Formative assessment practices should be integrated into all lessons.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Loreto Secondary School Wexford is a voluntary secondary school with 721 female students. It offers Junior Certificate, Transition Year, Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The school offers French, German and Japanese. Students can opt to study two languages.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to excellent in the majority of lessons observed. There was scope for development in a minority of lessons in relation to methodologies used to improve students' communicative competence.
- French was used consistently as the language of instruction in the majority of lessons observed. Students in these lessons were also actively encouraged and facilitated to communicate in the target language. In some instances, the practice of beginning the lesson with a number of general questions facilitated more spontaneous and authentic communication at a range of levels. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons. Opportunities to further build on this initiative at senior cycle could include asking questions relating to current affairs from the news items projected in the reception area, each morning. This would support language improvement and feed in very effectively to the school's literacy strategy.
- Lessons were well structured and in most instances appropriately paced. Clear learning intentions were established at the outset, and in some instances, seamlessly revisited as the lesson progressed. There was one lesson where the learning intentions established were more limited and did not challenge the students sufficiently. This should be addressed.
- A range of very effective methodologies was observed. In one lesson, a very good listening activity served to support student comprehension and to promote cultural awareness. Of particular note was the manner in which the teacher circulated, checking individual student's comprehension as the activity progressed.
- Very good practice was noted in some lessons where a guided approach was used to build up vocabulary for the lesson topic. This was achieved through the provision of synonyms and alternative expressions and through brainstorming and mind mapping.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was well exploited in the majority of lessons. PowerPoint presentations were very effective in one lesson in supporting vocabulary acquisition entirely through French, while in another lesson they supported differentiation. The use of a video clip from You Tube with appropriate linguistic scaffolding enhanced both student engagement and learning in another lesson.
- The making of a film using ICT in one lesson, while conceptually creative, was less successful as a language learning initiative. There was insufficient clarity of purpose for students in terms of the language learning intentions and English was used predominantly as the language of communication for the organisational aspect of the work. It is recommended that greater time be allocated in advance to progressing the students' oral language skills in order to support the film content. Opportunities should be provided for drafting and redrafting students' respective roles using resources such as file-sharing. Students should also be versed in the basic language of film making and direction so that the overall process becomes primarily a rich and enjoyable language learning experience.

- The work of the language assistant supported learning in a number of lessons by exposing students to different voices and accents and demonstrating authentic interactions modelled with the teacher.
- Well-structured and purposeful pair work was observed where students actively engaged with the tasks assigned. To further enhance the very good practices observed, teachers should ask students to report back on the work of their partners, thereby moving from the first to the third person and extending their skills. In one lesson, which was predominantly teacher led, greater use of pair or group work to promote active learning is recommended.
- While most teachers endeavoured to develop all the language skills through an integrated approach, some further in-class attention to promoting writing skills development is recommended. The use of games, as observed in some lessons, enhanced both learning and the enjoyment of the lesson.
- Good assessment practices observed included question-and-answer sessions and the use of show-me boards to ascertain general understanding and learning. Very good practice was also noted in one lesson where students were asked to assess their own work against a model answer.
- Homework corrections in many of the copy books examined included helpful or affirmative comments. It is recommended that the practice of formative assessment be further extended by indicating to students their strengths and areas for development. There were some copybooks where the work corrected contained mistakes that had not been noted. Failure to note or correct errors limits the learning opportunities for students and should be addressed.
- There is very good uptake of higher level in the certificate examinations. There are good levels of attainment and results are analysed against national norms. To ensure that all students are achieving to their full potential, teachers should extend their analysis to comparing French results against in-school trends for all subjects.

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

- School management's support for modern languages is evident in the opportunity for students to study more than one language and in the appropriate allocation of time for French, its timetabling and the provision of resources.
- There were attractive language learning environments in the classrooms visited and in some instances mini-charts of classroom language were stuck on the desks. This practice should be extended throughout and charts of key expressions should be posted up for the different topics as the year progresses.
- The good uptake of continuing professional development (CPD) over the years is acknowledged. Teachers are encouraged to maintain this practice by availing of the range of CPD opportunities provided by the Department and the French Cultural Services, the French Teachers' Association and local education centres.
- The school has a French exchange programme which is good practice. Consideration should also be given to initiating alternative projects for those unable to travel to France.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The subject plan for French is very informative. It sets out the context for teaching French in the school and for evaluating its progression, in terms of general teaching approaches and the integration of whole-school issues such as literacy and numeracy.
- The schemes of work for each year group should be further developed to include the learning outcomes, proposed methodologies and assessment practices for each topic.
- Teachers should work together to develop common schemes of work for the chosen areas of study in Transition Year (TY). The planning of lessons as self-contained units is good practice in the context of the school's TY programme.

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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.

# **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 and French Department are very pleased with the content of the inspection 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 French Department will continue its existing commendable practice in relation to teaching and learning and will also take into account the good recommendations made in the report.

The Board of Management will continue to support French teachers and students of the subject in every possible way.