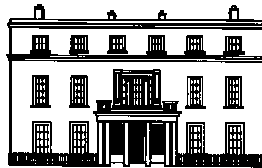


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

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

**Deansrath Community College**  
**Clondalkin, Dublin 22**  
**Roll number: 70040H**

**Date of inspection: 8 April 2014**



**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 FRENCH**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	8 April 2014
<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 four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Good or very good teaching practices were noted in some lessons, while there was scope for development in others.
- There was varied use of the target language by the teachers in the lessons observed; it was consistently used in some lessons and to a very limited extent in others.
- A variety of methodologies was observed and, where they were effectively used they resulted in good learning.
- Learning was most successful where students were active participants in the work of the lesson and were enabled to interact in the target language.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- All teachers should use methodologies that support the use of French as the language of instruction and communication.
  - An integrated approach to language skills development should be adopted in all lessons.
  - Pair or group work tasks should be designed in a manner that necessitates student interaction in French.
  - Subject planning should be advanced to incorporate the criteria for the optimum delivery of French into the schemes of work for each year group and to meet the literacy and numeracy targets contained in the school's Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools initiative (DEIS) plan.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Deansrath Community College is a co-educational post-primary school with 382 students, under the auspices of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education Training Board. The second-level sector of the school offers the Junior Certificate (JC), the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the established Leaving Certificate (LC), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The study of a modern European language is optional. The school currently participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Very good practice in the use of varied methodologies was noted in some lessons. Areas for development include greater use of the target language and a more integrated approach to language skills development.
- French was consistently used as the language of instruction by some of the teachers. It was used to a very limited extent in the other lessons observed. In line with the requirements of the syllabus, it is essential that all teachers use strategies that support the ongoing use of French in the classroom. Classroom instructions and explanations should be given in French. Where there are difficulties in comprehension, students should be supported through the use of visuals, writing vocabulary on the board or setting the context before translating into English.
- To build up students' use of French, all teachers should provide the learners with the necessary expressions to ask questions, express difficulty or make requests in simple French.
- The lesson plan was written up on the board either as the lesson content or the learning objective. To maximise the benefits of these practices, teachers should articulate the plan in terms of what the students should know by the end of the lesson. These learning outcomes should be revisited at the conclusion of the lesson to assess students' progress.
- Some teachers endeavoured to attribute due attention to all of the language skills through the use of varied methodologies including listening, oral and writing activities. Grammar instruction was also integrated skilfully into one of the lessons observed. These are good practices.
- In some lessons a more traditional grammar-translation approach dominated. In these instances an integrated approach to language skills development is recommended, where the receptive skills of listening and reading support understanding and, in turn feed into the productive skills of speaking and writing.
- The use of worksheets was observed in some lessons. To maximise this good practice, teachers should avoid including the English translation on the sheets as this limits the challenge for students to work out meaning in the target language. In some instances flashcards served effectively to support the work of the lesson.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in a number of lessons to support learning. In some instances video clips were used, supported by a preparatory phase and follow-up worksheets. Elements of cultural awareness were skilfully incorporated into the work of these lessons through the choice of video-clips. These practices are commended. Greater and more creative use of ICT is recommended in other lessons to enhance student learning.

- Pair work was observed in some lessons and was effective in promoting students' oral skills development. All lessons should include pair or group tasks to encourage students to build up their linguistic confidence and competence.
- Pair work was also used in some lessons to support students' writing skills development. However, the benefits of a collaborative approach in this regard were limited as students spoke English when working together. All pair or group work tasks should be designed to foster student interaction in French.
- Students were very well behaved in all lessons. Active student engagement and learning was most effective in the lessons where the methodologies were varied and the language skills were taught in context. In some lessons learning was less effective as the pace of the lesson was slow and students were insufficiently challenged. This resulted in students disengaging from the work in hand. In these instances, greater variety in the teaching strategies used and due attention to the development of all the language skills are recommended.
- The sample of copybooks inspected indicated that homework is regularly assigned. Corrections in many instances included teacher comments. This is good practice in affirming and informing students of their progress. Teachers should further develop formative assessment practices to enable students to benefit fully from the completion and correction of their personal work. To support them in this endeavour as well as providing them with general strategies for active teaching and learning, teachers should consider the use of 'assessment for learning' (AFL) strategies.

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

- There is good whole-school provision and support for French in the allocation of time, and the provision of material resources. However, not all teachers are appropriately qualified in the subject. School management should endeavour to ensure that teachers deployed for the teaching and learning of French are qualified to degree level in the subject.
- Displays of French posters, and charts of classroom language and key expressions were observed in the classrooms visited. This good practice should be further extended by posting up expressions for the week or the topic and allowing students time to assimilate this learning.
- Some members of the French department have availed of professional development courses for teachers of French and this is commended. To further support linguistic and pedagogical up-skilling, teachers could consider attending in-service training on methodologies provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) or the French Teachers' Association (FTA).
- Consideration should also be given to applying for a French assistant and establishing links with a French school for purpose of exchanging resources and promoting intercultural dialogue.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A subject plan is in place for French, setting out the school context and including work schemes for each year group. To build on the good work already completed, teachers should refocus their overall objectives to support the development of language skills rather

than specific language content. To this end, the schemes of work for each year group should be framed in terms of the topic to be studied, the learning outcomes, the methodologies, resources and assessment protocols. Strategies to incorporate literacy and numeracy development in French should also be included in line with the targets established in the school's DEIS plan.

- It is recommended that all future subject planning meetings include discussion of teaching and learning, the analysis of examination outcomes and the sharing of good practice in addition to dealing with issues of a practical nature. This should help teachers when planning and preparing for individual lessons and support ongoing school improvement in the delivery of French as a subject.

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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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response