

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Presentation Secondary School
Loughboy, Kilkenny
Roll number: 61590S**

Date of inspection: 20 November 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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	20 November 2014
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 and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good or very good with excellent practice noted in one lesson.
- French was used consistently as the language of instruction in most lessons; this was enhanced in a number of instances by students' endeavours to use the target language in response.
- All lessons were well structured and a range of effective methodologies supported a good balance between teacher instruction and student activity.
- There is good whole-school provision and support for French in terms of allocation of time, provision of resources and good teacher commitment to developing meaningful partnerships with French schools.
- Good work has been completed to date in subject planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should devise strategies to encourage all students to interact more spontaneously in French and to extend their writing skills development.
 - Teachers should further develop the skills and practice of formative feedback and introduce the practice of peer assessment where appropriate.
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INTRODUCTION

Presentation Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school with 698 female students. It has a mixed socio-economic catchment and serves the city of Kilkenny and its hinterland. It offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied programmes. The study of a modern European language is mandatory in both and senior cycle.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good or very good with excellent practice noted in one lesson.
- The target language was used consistently by the teachers in all of the lessons observed. This is good practice. There were some instances where translation was used to support some of the weaker students. Where there is a need to differentiate, it is recommended that alternative strategies to translation should be used.
- Students in a number of lessons made good efforts to respond to the teachers in French. There was one instance where, at the beginning of the lesson, students were asked to talk about what they had done the previous evening. This very effective practice, which resulted in authentic and spontaneous interaction in French, should be extended to all lessons, varying the topics and level of difficulty as appropriate.
- All lessons were well structured and paced. The range of methodologies used served to maintain a good balance between teacher instruction and student activity.
- Teachers began their lessons with the correction of homework and the establishment of learning outcomes. This good practice should be further extended by reframing the outcomes in terms of what the students will be able to do by the end of the lesson. The learning outcomes should be reviewed at the end of the lesson to assess student progress.
- The topic approach, as observed in all lessons, facilitated the integration of the different language skills including the effective teaching of grammar. However, greater focus was placed in some lessons on the receptive skills of listening and understanding than on the productive skills of speaking and writing. This should be addressed by enabling the students to extend their learning by brainstorming vocabulary, creating families of words and integrating this new vocabulary into different oral and written contexts.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used to very good effect in some lessons. The use of a video-clip in one instance supported by a very good preparatory phase, resulted in active student engagement and quality follow-through work. In another lesson, the use of a PowerPoint presentation playing in the background as students worked on an activity, promoted cultural awareness. Greater and more creative use of ICT is recommended in some instances to provide visual supports and stimulus material in addition to promoting cultural awareness.
- Pair or group work was very effectively managed in most lessons and students engaged with the tasks assigned. Good practice was noted in one lesson where a differentiated worksheet was distributed to support the mixed-ability nature of the student cohort. In another lesson, students were given dialogues to practice, an activity that they carried out very effectively. As a follow-on to this activity, students should be asked to devise similar situations where they are required to interact more spontaneously.

- A variety of homework assignments was noted in students' copybooks, some of which commendably involved the manipulation of language. Good practice was also noted where teachers included written formative comments. Teachers should consider increasing the frequency with which they give short exercises promoting writing skills development and also where they can indicate to students their strengths, their improvements and their areas for development.
- Peer assessment was used in one lesson to support learning. This very good practice should be extended to all lessons as students were quick to note errors and to correct them.
- A very positive learning environment prevailed throughout and all students applied themselves to the work in hand. Most of them demonstrated good willingness to interact with the inspector and their answers indicated good evidence of learning. This was most evident in the lesson where students were given the greatest opportunities for spontaneous interaction.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good whole school provision and support for French in the allocation of time, timetabling and the provision of resources. First-year students currently have four periods a week for French, while second-year students currently have three periods a week. School management should explore the possibility of reversing this timetabling arrangement to afford second-year students four periods as this would be more beneficial to their learning.
- An attractive print-rich environment promoting both the French language and culture was observed in the classrooms visited. The practice of fixing sheets with classroom language onto the desks is commended as a means of supporting student use of the target language.
- There is good commitment to continuing professional development and teachers have in the past undertaken courses to support both linguistic and pedagogical upskilling. In order to maintain this good practice, teachers should also consider applying for the scholarships currently available for teachers of French to attend a course on France.
- Good work is currently being carried out to build up meaningful partnerships with French schools for the purpose of increasing student contact with France through exchanges and projects.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers meet as a subject department and minutes of planning meetings are recorded. These minutes indicate that much of the discussion at planning meetings are of an organisational nature. While such discussion is essential, teachers should also incorporate discussion of teaching and learning for the purpose of sharing good practice.
- Planning for the future of French in terms of maintaining and increasing student uptake of the subject should also be central to the subject planning agenda. The introduction of an oral assessment for each year group should also be included.
- A collaborative subject plan has been developed for the teaching and learning of French. Schemes of work are tabulated in terms of the topic, learning outcomes, homework and assessment. It is recommended that, over time, teachers align more specific learning

outcomes to each topic and include the methodologies to support the achievement of these outcomes.

- More detail is needed in the TY plan to demonstrate how the delivery of the programme is in line with the principles of an effective TY programme.

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; a response was not received from the board.