

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of French
REPORT

Our Lady's Secondary School
Templeogue, Dublin 6W
Roll number: 60860Q

Date of inspection: 8 April 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	8 April 2016
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 quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in most of the lessons observed, with some scope for development in a minority of lessons regarding the use of the target language and active teaching strategies.
- Consistent use of the target language by the teachers was observed in most instances, although translation was overly used in a small number of lessons.
- Lessons were well structured and paced and a number of very effective methodologies supporting active learning, were observed.
- Whole school provision for the teaching and learning of French is good and is further supported by teachers' commitment to continuing professional development.
- Good systems are in place to support high quality subject planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- French as the language of the classroom should be extended to all lessons and alternative strategies to translation should be used as a means of scaffolding learning.
- Opportunities to develop students' oral confidence and competency should be incorporated into every lesson and teachers should ensure that all pair or group tasks necessitate full student participation.
- The practice of formative feedback should be further developed and all students should be given the necessary opportunities to progress their writing skills development.

INTRODUCTION

Our Lady's Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school with 763 female students. It offers the Junior Certificate (JC), Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate (LC). French is a core subject in junior cycle. It is offered in two subject option bands in senior cycle. This affords students the opportunity to study French and either German or Spanish at senior cycle if desired.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in most of the lessons observed. There was scope for development in a minority of lessons regarding the use of the target language and strategies to ensure full and active student participation.
- The target language was used consistently by the teachers in most of the lessons inspected, but in some instances it was heavily scaffolded by translation. All lessons should be conducted through the medium of French. Where there was limited use of French in evidence or where students' expressed difficulty with understanding, the target language should be built up incrementally and alternative strategies to translation should be used.
- All students should be given the expressions necessary to express difficulty, ask questions and make requests. Students should be actively encouraged to interact in French and opportunities for such interaction with their teachers and their peers should be facilitated in every lesson. Opportunities for more spontaneous interactions in French should also be built up incrementally in lessons.
- Teachers began by communicating the lesson objectives. Best practice occurred where they were articulated in terms of what the students would be able to achieve by the end of the lesson. This approach should be extended to all lessons and teachers should also include time to revisit the learning intentions for the purpose of assessing student progress.
- Most lessons were well structured and paced. There was good recall of previous learning in many instances and this effectively supported the work in hand. Due attention to the different language skills was observed in some lessons. However, in others, greater use of an integrated approach is recommended, where the receptive skills of listening and reading support the productive skills of speaking and writing.
- Effective strategies for the purpose of revising or extending students' vocabulary included brainstorming, the creation of mind maps or the use of worksheets; they progressed the work of the lesson in a systematic manner. These good practices should be further enhanced by highlighting corresponding nouns, verbs, adjectives and adverbs, thereby creating families of words. Further good practice noted was the highlighting of keywords to indicate the correct choice of tense to be used in sentences.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was effectively used in most lessons. A very good video-clip on pronunciation supported students' oral skills development in one lesson. The simple but effective strategy of projecting visual images, observed in another lesson, served as a good stimulus for students to complete the tasks assigned.
- All lessons included pair-work activities. They were most successful where the tasks were purposeful and were followed by a plenary session in which students reported back

on their partners' responses. This enabled them to extend their language skills by moving from talking about themselves to talking about others.

- In a minority of lessons students demonstrated some resistance to working in pairs and did not interact in French. Teachers should incorporate tasks for the purpose of developing students' oral confidence and competence into every lesson and ensure that the tasks assigned necessitate interaction.
- Learning was most effective where there was a strong focus on using the target language and where there were clear expectations regarding active student participation. Students in these lessons demonstrated good competence in their interactions in French.
- Some of the homework corrections noted in students' copybooks had affirming comments, while others had elements of more formative feedback to support students' progress. The good practice of providing formative feedback should be further developed and extended to all corrections as appropriate. Teachers should also consider asking students to note their areas for improvement at the beginning of each new writing task, thereby making them more attentive to progressing their writing skills.
- There were some copybooks where there was very little evidence of exercises requiring manipulation of language. All students should be given the opportunity to develop their writing skills from the outset, beginning with simple sentence construction, then moving on to short paragraphs and, in time, engaging in more extensive writing tasks.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for modern European languages. Students are afforded the opportunity to study two languages. Provision for French in the allocation of time and timetabling is very good.
- An attractive learning environment has been created in the teacher-based classrooms with wall displays of students' work and charts of grammar points. It is recommended that the noticeboards in classrooms be kept updated with the relevant vocabulary and expressions for each new topic posted on the walls for students to assimilate over time.
- There has been very good commitment to continuing professional development by the teachers of French in recent years. The learning and enjoyment of French is also enhanced by the range of co-curricular activities offered.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of subject planning and preparation is good. Schemes of work are well set out in terms of overall learning outcomes, methodologies, resources, assessment and cross-curricular activities. To build on the good work already completed it is recommended that the overall schemes of work be further broken down into learning outcomes, methodologies, resources and assessment protocols for each topic or unit of work, thereby progressing students' language learning incrementally.
- The minutes of subject department meetings indicate evidence of good discussion and sharing of expertise among teachers. This good practice should be further enhanced by taking one challenging aspect of teaching and learning for discussion at every planning meeting and developing strategies to support improved outcomes.

- The modular approach adopted for the delivery of the Transition Year programme, where each teacher works with each group on areas of their own particular interest and expertise is good practice. As part of the planning process, teachers should also research more creative ways of dealing with topics that are already familiar to students or which form part of the senior cycle syllabus.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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 the French Department accept the findings of the inspection.
- They are pleased that some very good quality teaching and learning was observed and that the use of the target language, ICT, effective teaching methodologies supporting active learning and well-paced lessons were all commended.
- The Board is pleased that the very good whole school support for Modern European Languages and the systems for high quality subject planning were noted.
- They are also pleased that the commitment to continuous professional development and to the promotion of French through extracurricular activities were commended.

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 target language is used widely by the teachers and it is planned to extend this to all lessons by utilizing alternative strategies to translation as appropriate and by ensuring that students have the necessary vocabulary to express difficulty, ask questions and make requests.
- It is planned to extend the use of active methodologies with an emphasis on enhancing students' oral confidence and competency.
- It is planned to continue creating an attractive learning environment, updating displays in line with current topics.
- The further development of formative feedback is planned as part of our whole school approach to improving Teaching and Learning.