

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of French
REPORT

St Aloysius School
Sharman Crawford Street
Cork
Roll number: 62630J

Date of inspection: 5 December 2011



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	5 December 2011
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, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.
- The very good use of French by the teachers as the language of communication and instruction in the classroom ensured that students were confident in their use of the language.
- Students were well-behaved and cooperative, and the atmosphere in the classrooms was relaxed and positive.
- The provision for modern foreign languages is excellent.
- There was clear evidence of detailed individual teacher planning and preparation for the lessons observed.
- The incorporation of an assessment of oral proficiency in French into the assessment procedures throughout the school underlines the ongoing commitment to promoting communicative language skills among the students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The practice of sharing the learning outcomes of a lesson with students should be further extended.
- Future subject planning should focus on the inclusion of elements common to the range of foreign languages on offer in the school, as well as on ensuring that the plan reflects the very good practice in areas such as target language use.

INTRODUCTION

St Aloysius School is a voluntary secondary school for girls under the trusteeship of CEIST (Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust). The school has a current enrolment of 268 students. The curricular programmes on offer include an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good. Lessons were well-structured and paced, with good integration of the key language skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing.
- Learning activities were varied and well managed. Student engagement and independent learning was encouraged through pair and small group work as well as through judicious use of language games such as bingo and crosswords.
- While all lessons had a clear structure and direction, the learning outcomes were not always shared with students. Extending the practice of communicating the outcomes with students is recommended as a way of ensuring that they are aware of the lesson focus and of their responsibilities as learners in the process.
- The target language was spoken consistently by the teachers during the lessons. This approach ensured that students in turn were challenged to speak in French. Close attention was paid to ensuring correct pronunciation, intonation and spelling, as well as to the use of subject specific vocabulary. As a result, many students were very confident in using the language in their interactions both with the teacher and with other students, in particular when engaged in pair or group work.
- While there was generally a good balance between teacher input and student talk with students encouraged to play an active part in the lesson, the use of role-plays and surveys are suggested as language tasks that might help to boost the confidence of *ab initio* students of French. The successful completion of such activities during the lesson would give students a sense of achievement and would further support their learning.
- The relatively small numbers in some classes helped to facilitate the close monitoring of students' oral contributions that was a consistent feature of the approach taken by all teachers. A variety of questioning techniques was used to good effect in all lessons and it was very positive that students were encouraged to engage in self-evaluation.
- Good use was made of differentiated teaching methods to meet the needs of individual students, with the use of visual aids such as flash cards and worksheets particularly effective in this regard.
- Attention was paid by the teachers to helping students to organise their work such as the recording of new vocabulary in their notebooks. Practices and procedures relating to homework were good. It was evident that homework is regularly assigned and corrected, with some use of assessment for learning techniques. Records are maintained of assessment results by the teachers.
- The enthusiasm and energy of the teachers and their evident commitment to languages ensured a very positive learning environment. The teachers had high expectations for their students who were courteous, co-operative and interested in their work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for modern foreign languages is excellent with French, German, Spanish, Italian and Chinese currently available. In first year, students decide their core language from a choice of French and German. They may also have the option of choosing a second language depending on the range of options available.
- There is a commendable emphasis on cultural awareness and activities that provide a European dimension to the language-learning experience through activities such as the Christmas Fair, attendance at the French film festival and other class and school events.
- The displays of language-related material in the designated French room and other classrooms ensure a stimulating language-learning environment. It is suggested that journalistic articles on current affairs relevant to senior cycle students should also be included on a regular basis.
- Access to information and communication technology (ICT) equipment is good with data projectors in the base classrooms as well as a mobile data projector and access to the school's computer room.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The department is well co-ordinated and teacher collaboration is facilitated by means of some timetabled meetings and through frequent informal meetings. The meeting records show that there is regular discussion of organisational and curricular issues as well as an ongoing review of the subject plan and development work on an e-learning plan.
- In order to reflect the strength of languages within the school, it is suggested that the subject plan should be broadened to incorporate elements that are common to all the foreign languages on offer. In this way, the plan would more clearly reflect the good practice that is evident in areas such as target language use. The inclusion of a small number of targets in the area of learning is also suggested as a focus for future planning.
- Planning for individual lessons was thorough and included the preparation of appropriate resources.
- Students' progress is tracked through class tests and formal house examinations. Very good practice is evident in the inclusion of an oral assessment for all students, and this practice supports the commitment to target language use in the classroom. An analysis of results in the certificate examinations is also carried out annually by the teachers.

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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