

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of French
REPORT

Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí
Bantry, County Cork
Roll number: 76090G

Date of inspection: 19 September 2012



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	18 and 19 September 2012
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in lessons observed was generally very good.
- The target language was used extensively in lessons.
- Teacher-student rapport was generally excellent thus facilitating student engagement.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively to support teaching and learning.
- Access to and support for the learning of French is very good.
- The newly formed French department is very committed and works collaboratively to support and develop provision.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Lesson objectives should be identified as student learning outcomes.
 - The good practice of formally assessing students' oral competence should be extended progressively to junior classes.
 - Teacher professional development could be enhanced through the sharing of good practice with the Irish department and through the integration of some teacher-self evaluation.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Pobail Bheanntaí is a mixed post-primary school under the co-trusteeship of Cork County Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Diocese of Cork and Ross. This amalgamated school opened in 2011. It currently has a total enrolment of 652, comprising 635 post-primary students and seventeen post-leaving certificate students. The school includes an Irish-medium section and a special education needs section. It participates in the School Completion Programme (SCP). The school offers Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and an optional Transition Year (TY) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Lesson content was well chosen. It was syllabus-relevant and of interest to the lives of the students. Consideration was given to the inclusion of the various language skills as appropriate and to opportunities for the development of cultural awareness. There were some very good examples of the imaginative exploitation of content.
- Lesson objectives were identified. However, it was recommended that these be identified as linguistic learning outcomes for students. The benefits of differentiating assigned work with a view to further challenging students, as appropriate, were discussed.
- All lessons were conducted in the target language. French was widely used for classroom communication also. Student use of the target language was encouraged by the inclusion of pair work, the requirement that students ask as well answer questions and by the inclusion of a brainstorming exercise. It was recommended that significant emphasis be put on the teaching and acquisition of reproducible linguistic structures especially in junior classes.
- A variety of methodologies was used in lessons observed. Lessons were teacher-directed but also included examples of the use of pair work and independent-learning. The inclusion, where appropriate, of games and songs encouraged student engagement.
- The effective integration of ICT in many lessons provided visual reinforcement. One lesson was conducted in the multi-media suite. Wisely, students were first introduced to computer-related terminology. Individual use of the computers supported independent learning and the inclusion of authentic televised material.
- Lessons generally were very well managed. Teachers are positive and encouraging and a very good student-teacher rapport was established.
- Lessons generally supported the development of communicative literacy. The lesson conducted in the multi-media suite provided support for both the development of students' media and digital literacy.
- Students are being encouraged to develop good learning and language-learning habits. It was very positive to see students being expected to use a self-evaluation sheet in one of the lessons observed.
- Student work is monitored and records are maintained. It was suggested that a correction code be agreed and used so as to support assessment for learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- French is key element of curricular provision in the school. Access to the subject is very good and where optional, uptake is good and increasing. All students are encouraged and supported to take the language.
- Participation in the SCP means that currently the school benefits from the services of a young French volunteer. This individual works with the French teachers to provide valuable targeted support for the student cohort concerned.
- Allocation of time to French is very good. Subject selection and timetable constraints necessitate the provision of some double periods at senior cycle but it is very positive that students have a total of eleven periods during fifth and sixth year.
- Subject provision is very well supported by an excellent infra-structure, well-equipped rooms and the availability of resources. Sharing of resources and professional learning among teachers is facilitated by the use of a shared data system. Rooms are teacher-based at junior cycle in particular. A print-rich environment has been created in these rooms; displays support the development of cultural awareness and the use of French as the language of classroom communication.
- Students' oral competence is formally assessed at senior cycle. It is recommended that this good practice be progressively extended to junior cycle classes also.
- Classroom provision and the development of students' cultural awareness are supported by the organisation of an annual tour to France and may be enhanced by the possibility of a link with a French school. The professional and personal commitment of teachers' involved is respectfully acknowledged.
- The team of French teachers, many of whom have much experience, are committed to professional development. Some of the team have had active involvement in the organisation of continuous professional development (CPD) for French teachers in the region. It is recommended that the school make an application to the Department of Education and Skills for the services of a French language assistant; a fulltime language assistant would further support the teaching and learning of French as a living language.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is a departmental structure in place in the school and the position of co-ordinator of the French department is rotated which is very positive.
- The team of French teachers is to be complimented on the extent to which professional collaboration and planning has been achieved in the context of the recent amalgamation. Opportunities now exist for some collaboration with teachers of Irish in the school and for the integration of some self-evaluation to support the ongoing development of the teaching and learning of French.
- A comprehensive set of plans has been devised. It is very good that the plans make mention of the school-specific aim of supporting students to experience a stay in France. To enhance existing planning, it is advised that individual thematic-based plans specify related linguistic structures to be taught, and also include reference to assessment and evaluation. Subject planning could also consider the incremental development of the four skills of listening, speaking, reading and writing.

- A TY plan has also been developed. Commendably, this plan includes the specification of student learning outcomes and makes reference to project work. In future development of this plan, reference should be made to cross-curricular work, assessment and evaluation. An opportunity exists also to provide greater detail in relation to the project work element of the course and the skills to be developed therein.
 - All lessons observed had been planned and prepared. Planning and delivery of lessons took cognisance of previous and future lessons. Preparation had included the careful sourcing, preparation and development of resource materials.
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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.