

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of French
REPORT**

**Saint Oliver Post-Primary School
Oldcastle, County Meath
Roll number: 71990R**

Date of inspection: 24 September 2015



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection:	23 and 24 September
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good in the lessons observed.
- The target language was used to some degree in all lessons; however, many teachers reverted back to English as lessons progressed.
- A variety of methodologies was observed ranging from teacher-led instruction to strategies promoting more active student engagement.
- Learning was most successful in lessons where the methodologies incorporated active participation from students.
- There is good whole-school provision for French and teachers demonstrate strong commitment to ongoing professional development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The use of French as the language of instruction and communication should be progressed through increased use of the target language by the teachers and more opportunities for student-teacher and student-student interaction in every lesson.
- Teachers should ensure that the strategies used in lessons are sufficiently purposeful and explicit in promoting active student participation, particularly in the area of oral skills development.
- Teachers should incorporate greater discussion of teaching and learning into subject planning meetings for the purpose of progressing their subject development agenda.

INTRODUCTION

Saint Oliver Post-Primary School is a co-educational post-primary school, with 543 students, under the auspices of the Louth Meath Education and Training Board (LMETB). It offers the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, but with scope for development in the use of the target language and encouraging greater student participation in lessons.
- There was some use of the target language by the teachers in all of the lessons observed. However, some teachers reverted back to English as the lesson progressed while others scaffolded the use of French with translation into English. All teachers should build up the use of French as the language of instruction and interaction. All classroom instructions should be given in French and, where scaffolding is needed, teachers should consider alternative strategies to translation.
- Students should also be actively facilitated to interact in the target language. They should be given the necessary expressions for asking questions, seeking assistance and making requests. Opportunities for more spontaneous interaction in French should also be afforded to students in every lesson through directed questioning and greater use of oral activities during lessons.
- All lessons were well structured, beginning with the articulation of learning outcomes. Good practice was noted in some instances where these outcomes were revisited at different stages during the lesson. However, in some instances the proposed outcomes were not sufficiently challenging for the higher-ability students. This should be addressed.
- Teachers endeavoured to teach a range of language skills in their lessons. However, the use of a more integrated approach where the receptive skills of listening and reading support the productive skills of speaking and writing is recommended to maximise learning.
- Very good efforts to teach grammar in an integrated manner were noted in some lessons, but in others, a more traditional grammar translation approach was used. All teachers should adopt the integrated approach to the teaching of grammar using either a reading or listening text as the stimulus to set the context.
- A range of methodologies was observed. Question-and-answer sessions were used in all lessons to test comprehension and to elicit responses from students. In some lessons a better balance between global and directed questioning is recommended to ensure that all students participate. The benefits of these question-and-answer sessions should be maximised by getting students to ask and answer questions of their peers subsequent to answering the questions asked by their teachers.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) supported learning in all lessons through the use of simple PowerPoint presentations in some instances, while the use of a video clip and song served very effectively to engage students in one lesson. More creative use of ICT to actively engage students and extend learning is recommended in some instances.

- Pair or group work was observed in many lessons. However, a specific need for students to interact with each other was not sufficiently explicit in the tasks assigned. This should be addressed and at least one pair or group task for the purpose of oral skills development should be incorporated into every lesson.
- Many of the lessons were teacher led and, while students were receptive, they were not sufficiently active in their learning. They answered the questions asked and completed the tasks assigned, but they did not ask questions or interact spontaneously and, in some instances, were not sufficiently challenged to extend their learning.
- Good use of supplementary worksheets was observed in many lessons. Of particular note was the simple, but effective, strategy of attaching post-it tabs to worksheets containing additional information for students where required.
- The use of show-me boards for plenary corrections or verification of student comprehension was also good practice. The use of coded cards, in another lesson, to agree or disagree with the statements made by the teacher is also good practice, but should be further extended by asking students to give reasons for their answers.
- Homework was given and corrected. Aspects of formative assessment were noted in some copybooks, where corrections included teacher comments. This practice should be extended throughout the French department and further developed as the year progresses by identifying and affirming the strengths in the students' work, highlighting the areas for improvement and enabling the students to revise their work accordingly.
- The current plans to introduce the Junior Certificate oral examination are welcomed. To support this initiative, teachers should introduce an annual oral assessment for all students.

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. There is also good support for and commitment to ongoing professional development by the teachers of French.
- Classrooms are predominantly teacher-based and an attractive print-rich environment has been developed in all the rooms visited. As the year progresses, teachers should extend their displays of classroom language and charts of key expressions for the topics being studied.
- The range of co-curricular activities afforded to students to promote learning and the enjoyment of French is commended. To further enhance these benefits, teachers should also consider initiatives such as e-twinning to promote interactive intercultural dialogue.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The minutes of subject planning meetings for French indicate that discussions are primarily of an organisational nature. Greater discussion of teaching and learning for the purpose of engendering ongoing improvement in the delivery of the curriculum and the advancement of students' linguistic skills should be incorporated into subject planning meetings. Such discussions should also include the analysis of student outcomes in the Certificate examinations in relation to in-school trends as well as national norms.
- Considerable work has been completed in developing schemes of work for each year group. To facilitate greater clarity of purpose and to ensure consistency in practice, the members of the French department should consider over time setting out their schemes of

work in tabular format indicating the topics to be studied, the learning outcomes for each topic, the methodologies, resources and assessment protocols appropriate to the different topics and cohorts.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal 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.

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