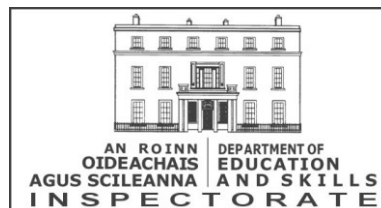


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of French**  
**REPORT**

**Coláiste Cois Siúire**  
**Mooncoin, County Kilkenny**  
**Roll number: 70620C**

**Date of inspection: 14 April 2016**



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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

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| <b>Dates of inspection</b>  | 13 and 14 April 2016   |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul> |

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, but with scope for development in the methodologies used, appropriate to the differentiated nature of the student cohort.
- The target language, while used by the teachers in the lessons observed, was overly scaffolded by translation.
- A range of methodologies and the use of creative resources were observed; however, the strong focus on translation, during lessons, limited somewhat the potential to use them to full effect.
- The uptake of French is low and there is scope for improvement in provision and support for the subject.
- Good work has been completed in subject planning for French.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should extend their use of French as the language of the classroom and students should be facilitated to progress their oral skills through increased interaction with the teacher and their peers.
  - All teachers should adopt a more integrated approach to teaching the different language skills.
  - The practice of formative feedback should be further developed and extended to all lessons.
  - The uptake of French should be reviewed as a whole-school priority.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Cois Siúire is a co-educational school with 148 students under the auspices of Carlow Kilkenny Education Training Board. It offers the Junior Certificate and the established Leaving Certificate. The school currently participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good, but with scope for development in choosing methodologies that reduce students' dependency on translation, while at the same time responding to their differentiated needs and abilities.
- French was the general language of instruction, but its use was strongly scaffolded by translation. This resulted in the higher-achieving students not being fully challenged to comprehend. While the differentiated nature of the student cohort is acknowledged, teachers should extend the use of French as the language of the classroom and provide linguistic scaffolding only to those experiencing significant difficulty.
- Students should be given the expressions needed for simple interactions in French. These expressions should be displayed on the walls to enable students to access and assimilate them over time. Opportunities for student interactions in French should be provided in every lesson to enable them to develop their confidence as well as oral competence.
- Teachers began by outlining the proposed lesson content. It is recommended that they articulate their plans as learning intentions to be achieved. This should afford students greater responsibility for their own learning. These learning intentions should be revisited as the lesson progresses in order to assess student progress.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were effective in promoting good engagement and learning. However, the strong focus on translation to support students' comprehension of the work in hand, limited the full benefits of many of the methodologies used.
- All lessons began with a series of questions based on prior learning. The benefits of this good practice should be extended by incrementally introducing questions that require spontaneity in students' replies. Students should also be facilitated to ask spontaneous questions of each other, thereby further extending their learning.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in all lessons. In most instances, the simple, but effective resources selected enhanced student engagement and learning.
- The revision or teaching of grammar was central to all of the lessons observed. A song was used in one lesson to support this work. However, the benefits of this very apt resource would have been enhanced had it initially served as a listening or reading text to promote understanding. It could then have been followed by the identification and application of the relevant grammar rule.
- PowerPoint presentations served as stimuli for the grammar exercises to be completed in another lesson. These presentations however, would have yielded better outcomes had they too been set within the context of an aural or reading text. To this end, a more integrated approach is recommended, where the development of listening and reading skills support speaking, writing and the learning of grammar.

- Pair or group work was observed in some lessons and there was good effort in one instance to group students in accordance with their differentiated needs and abilities. However, the tasks assigned were not for the purpose of oral skills development. It is recommended that pair work for oral skills development be incorporated into every lesson. Such activities should comprise short focused tasks, followed by a plenary session, where students report back on the work of their partners.
- A positive learning environment prevailed throughout. Students were very well behaved and applied themselves to their work. In the lessons where French was spoken more extensively by the teacher, students responded appropriately to the challenge and demonstrated good willingness to interact in French.
- Some of the homework corrections examined contained elements of formative feedback. This good practice should be further developed and extended to all written work. In one lesson, peer correction of work completed, while commendable, required greater attention as students were not always aware of errors made. Further practice in manipulating written language is also recommended.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- French is the only modern European language offered in Coláiste Cois Siúire and the study of French is optional from entry into the school. The very low uptake of French from first year is of some concern, given the implications for future career choices of not studying a modern European language. School management and the members of the French department should review the status of French in the school and devise strategies to raise its profile and improve uptake.
- Whole school support and provision for French is adequate. While there is appropriate allocation of time for French, school management should review timetabling arrangements as current practice does not facilitate the optimal learning of a language.
- Classrooms are teacher based and this supports the creation of a language learning environment. Good displays of posters and classroom language and useful expressions were observed in the classrooms visited. Teachers, however, should refer to them as appropriate and encourage students to do likewise.
- While some professional development has been undertaken by teachers, it is recommended that they also consider availing of the range of scholarships, and courses made available to teachers of French for the purpose of linguistic and pedagogical upskilling.
- Teachers should consider initiatives such as e-twinning for the purpose of intercultural dialogue and enhancing interest in and the enjoyment of language learning.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject planning for the teaching and learning of French is well advanced. Schemes of work are in place for each year group and are set out for junior cycle classes in terms of topics, learning intentions, time allocation and assessment modes. To enhance the quality of the work already completed, teachers should review the assessment section and differentiate appropriately between assessment and methodologies.

- The minutes of subject meetings indicate that they are primarily organisational in nature. It is recommended that discussion of teaching and learning practices be incorporated into all subject planning meetings. Areas of particular difficulty should be identified and strategies developed to overcome them.
- While student outcomes in French are in line with their overall results in the certificate examinations, it is recommended that teachers encourage students to set targets and to track their progress.

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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.