

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Errigal College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Windyhall Letterkenny County Donegal
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	712001

Date of Inspection: 26-09-2017



WHAT IS A SUBJECT INSPECTION?

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in French under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	26-09-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Errigal College is a co-educational post-primary school under the auspices of the Donegal Education and Training board (ETB). It has a current enrolment of 276 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA). The school currently participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching was generally satisfactory; greater use of the target language and the integration of the different language skills are areas for development.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were used to better effect than others.
- Students were receptive but not active in their learning; they would have benefited from more interactive learning opportunities and, in some instances, greater challenge.
- Whole-school provision and support for French are generally good.
- Planning is generally satisfactory; some adjustments are required to schemes of work.

Recommendations

- French should be used as the language of instruction and opportunities should be provided in every lesson for students to interact in French with the teacher and with their peers.
- An integrated approach to teaching the different language skills should be adopted.
- Teachers should use more active methodologies to support improved learning for all and to better challenge the higher ability students.
- Teachers should focus on developing units of work to meet the requirements of the new specification for modern languages; the TY plan should also be revised.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching was generally satisfactory. Areas for development include greater use of the target language and the integration of the different language skills.

- There was some use of the target language by the teachers in the lessons observed. They should endeavour to use French as the language of instruction throughout and opportunities should be provided in every lesson for students to interact with the teacher and with their peers. Where there are comprehension difficulties, teachers should seek alternatives to translation in order to maintain an appropriate level of challenge for the higher-ability students.
- While some attention to developing the different language skills was noted, it was limited to teaching them in isolation. To better support initial learning and its consolidation, an integrated approach should be adopted in all lessons where the receptive skills of listening and reading underpin the productive skills of speaking and writing. This approach also best supports the development of language awareness, where students learn to identify language patterns in texts. They can then apply their learning to their oral and writing skills development.
- A range of methodologies was observed, some of which were more effective than others. Revision and the testing of students' learning to date were carried out through the use of question-and-answer sessions and the assignment of closed student tasks. While some students demonstrated good evidence of learning, there were others who had not mastered the initial learning to a sufficient degree so as to complete the assigned tasks with ease.
- It is recommended that the integrated approach also be used in the case of revision where a quick recap on the key points of learning, using appropriate texts, should be carried out prior to testing. When learning or revising verbs or vocabulary, it is also recommended that they be set in the context of creating sentences which can both indicate students' understanding and support their writing skills development.
- Pair work was observed in most lessons and was effective in engaging the students, while at the same time ensuring a good balance between instruction and activity. When assigning pair or group tasks it is important to ensure that they have a clear purpose: for students to engage orally with their partners and seek out required information. One of the paired activities observed would have been more appropriate as an individual task.
- The use of a placemat exercise, as observed in one lesson, was an effective strategy to support learning. Teachers should seek out similar strategies that will enable students to work together and ultimately foster the exchange of ideas and learning in simple French.
- The inclusion of socio-cultural awareness in one lesson generated considerable enthusiasm from students and there was good evidence of learning in this regard. To further enhance this practice, teachers should discuss aspects of French life and culture in simple French and supported, where possible, by visuals.
- The quality of learning requires improvement. Students were well behaved throughout and receptive. They applied themselves well to the tasks assigned. However, they were not active in their learning, asking questions or volunteering answers. There were some students who would have benefited significantly from greater challenge. They indicated understanding beyond expectations for their stage of learning when interacting with the inspector. Greater use of more active methodologies is recommended.
- There was evidence of corrections in students' copybooks. To afford students more active involvement in their own learning, the practice of formative feedback is recommended to inform them of their strengths and areas for development.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school provision and support for French are generally good. Two modern European languages are offered. However, the study of a modern European language is optional. The school should explore ways to encourage greater uptake of languages in order to broaden students' educational pathways.
- The allocation of time and timetabling of French is satisfactory in most instances. However, improved provision is required for third-year students in order to facilitate optimum preparation for the junior-certificate examination.
- The modern languages classroom is an attractive learning space, enhanced with displays of posters, vocabulary and grammar charts. These displays should be extended as the year progresses to include charts of key expressions and grammatical constructions which students could assimilate over time. Consideration should also be given to re-arranging the desks to support more active learning.
- There is good access to and support for continuing professional development (CPD) and teachers, commendably, have availed of a range of CPD opportunities over the years. To further support them in their work, consideration should be given to availing of specific courses for teachers of French or general courses on co-operative learning or other relevant pedagogies offered in local education centres. The school should also consider applying for a French language assistant and consider initiatives such as e-Twinning to support students' linguistic advancement and improving uptake of the language.
- Assessment practices include assessment for learning, written aural and oral testing. Summative assessments are carried out three times yearly and student journals are designed to support student recording of monthly assessments.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Planning is generally satisfactory. Schemes of work are in place for each year group. These schemes focus on the topic and grammar to be taught while effective methodologies are listed on the general subject plan. It is recommended that these schemes be reconfigured to include the methodologies appropriate to the learning outcomes identified for the topics being studied.
- With the introduction of the new specification for modern languages, the focus of subject planning for the current year should be on developing units for work in line with the requirements of the specification. A collaborative approach across all modern languages is recommended.
- Each unit of work, comprising a number of lessons, should identify the intended learning outcomes, reference the different strands of communicative competence, language and socio-cultural awareness and how they are integrated into the work of the lesson, the tasks to be performed and assessment practices that align to the proposed success criteria. To support them in their work the teachers should refer to the specification itself, to the planning templates and the assessment guidelines available electronically. They should also incorporate elements of student reflection into the process ascertaining how best students learn and how they can be optimally supported.
- The TY plan should be reviewed to incorporate more active learning. It is suggested that activities involving learning-by-doing be considered in addition to projects carried out in simple French.

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 INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;