

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in German

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Joseph's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Lucan Co Dublin
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60263V

Date of Inspection: 23-09-2016



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 [German](#) under the following headings:

1. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	23 & 24-09-2016
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 6 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Joseph's College, Lucan is a large girls' voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Catholic Education, An Irish Schools Trust. The school offers a wide range of curricular programmes including a compulsory Transition Year. The current enrolment is 874. German is provided as an optional subject.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching was excellent and all teachers demonstrated a high level of competence and skill in the subject area and in highly effective teaching methodologies.
- Student use of the target language was very good and teachers used excellent strategies to scaffold and support the learners' development of oral skills in German.
- Teachers' application of the strategies associated with assessment for learning (AfL) was exemplary and the use of active teaching methodologies ensured very effective student engagement and learning.
- Students enjoyed their learning, were highly motivated and engaged very well with tasks during lessons.
- Teachers have engaged in a rich programme of continuing professional development (CPD) and the benefits of this are evident in their excellent classroom practice.
- School management are most committed to developing high quality teaching and learning practices in the school and have put in place highly commendable structures to ensure this.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Consideration should be given to providing extension activities for students who are capable of learning at a faster pace.
- Teachers should engage in peer lesson visits with a view to sharing the excellent practice in evidence in the course of the evaluation.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was excellent in the lessons observed and all teachers demonstrated a comprehensive knowledge of the curriculum and used highly effective pedagogical practices.
- Teacher use of the target language was of an exceptionally high standard and German was used to very good effect for all transactional purposes in the course of lessons. Teachers used visuals to support the introduction of new vocabulary thus ensuring that the target language could be used without recourse to translation and students demonstrated very good comprehension at all times.
- Student use of the target language was very good and students were given many opportunities to speak in German throughout lessons. Excellent methods such as strategically placed posters and laminated sheets containing frequently used German phrases on students' desks served to scaffold students' oral work.
- Very good attention to developing the skills of language acquisition in lessons was evident and teachers ensured that learners had very good opportunities to develop the skills of listening, reading, speaking and writing. The manner in which these skills were integrated ensured that the quality of student learning was excellent.
- Lesson content in all instances was theme based in line with syllabus requirements. Every effort was made by teachers to link the content to students' lives and interests. The pace of lessons was swift and transitions from one activity to the next were always smooth.
- All lessons began with very clear student learning outcomes and these were revisited throughout lessons and at their conclusion. This approach proved most effective in ensuring that learners were clear about their learning goals and when they had attained them.
- The quality of student learning was very good. Students enjoyed their learning, were highly motivated and enthusiastic about their learning and displayed a positive disposition towards German. Students engaged very well with tasks and completed them with a high degree of success.
- Students had very good opportunities to engage in independent learning and instructions by teachers to facilitate this autonomous approach were very clear. Teachers monitored students carefully while they were engaged in tasks thus ensuring high quality learning.
- The use of strategies associated with AfL was excellent and it was evident that teachers incorporate these strategies into their teaching practice on a regular basis. Active teaching methodologies such as games, role plays, group and pair work were used throughout lessons and this approach clearly enhanced student learning.
- Assessment practices were effective. Good questioning of students was evident and the learners were encouraged to engage in self and peer assessment. While a differentiated approach was evident, it is recommended that more strategies to challenge the learner who can learn at a faster pace be developed and implemented.
- Appropriate homework was assigned in all lessons. A review of students' copybooks provided evidence of very good quality learning. Teachers correct the learners' written work on a regular basis and provide effective feedback. Consideration should be given to providing those students who learn at a faster pace with extension homework assignments where feasible.

- Classroom management was highly effective and students' behaviour was exemplary. Classroom atmosphere was most positive and the very good rapport between students and teachers was evident.
- A very attractive and stimulating environment has been established in the classrooms where German is taught. Student work and materials that support an AfL approach were all in evidence on the walls. In line with best practice, the layout of the classroom furniture is non-traditional and enhances the communicative approach to language teaching and learning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Senior management provides excellent support for the delivery of the German curriculum. Timetabling arrangements are effective and students have very good access to the language.
- There are excellent resources available to support the teaching and learning of German. The teachers have taken great care to source a wide variety of high quality materials and it is notable that teachers have created a wide range of resources themselves.
- The German department is well resourced in terms of personnel and teachers have engaged proactively in a rich programme of CPD. School management has also provided excellent in-house CPD. The benefits of the teachers' commitment to and the time invested in CPD are reflected in the excellent classroom practice observed in the course of the evaluation.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- School management is most committed to developing high quality teaching and learning and have put in place highly commendable structures to ensure this. A subject co-ordinator is in place and the key co-ordination duties are very clearly delineated and carried out with commitment and dedication.
- The quality of subject department planning is highly commendable and teachers collaborate very effectively. The subject plan is very good. Teachers carry out a comprehensive analysis of state examination data in relation to attainment in German. The outcomes of the analysis are documented in the plan.
- The quality of planning for individual lessons was exemplary. Written lessons plans were provided and revealed meticulous attention to detail, particularly in relation to planning for efficient management of time in lessons. The high quality of planning for individual lessons paid dividends in the classroom and ultimately benefitted the students greatly.
- Excellent self-evaluation practices are in place in the subject department. The teachers use a common template containing most pertinent questions to analyse the quality of teaching and learning in their lessons. Consideration could also be given to using a similar template for the learners in order to capture the student voice as part of the German department's self-evaluation strategies.
- Given the well-established, highly effective, self-evaluation practices, teachers should consider engaging in peer lessons visits as this would provide a good mechanism to share the excellent practices in evidence throughout the evaluation.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The teachers welcome the excellent German Report from the Inspector and thank the Inspector for the feedback. They have implemented the following in response to the recommendations;

Consideration should be given to providing extension activities for students who are capable of learning at a faster pace.

1. Pooling of/Building a bank of resources and supplementary material within the German Department to challenge students who learn at a faster pace.
2. Discussion of NCCA Guidelines on meeting the needs of exceptionally able students and implementation of recommended practices.
3. Include planning for extension activities in daily lesson plans and yearly schemes of work to stretch and challenge the more able students.
4. Engage in CPD on meeting the needs of exceptionally able students/students who learn at a faster pace.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Teachers should engage in peer lesson visits with a view to sharing the excellent practice in evidence in the course of the evaluation.

1. A template for peer sharing visits is being developed. Visits will be structured around themes and topics relevant to the teaching of German e.g. Landeskunde; grammar; language acquisition etc.
2. Teachers have begun to visit each other's classes to view teaching approaches and have drawn up a plan for periodic visits.

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 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;