

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of French  
REPORT**

**Tarbert Comprehensive School**

**County Kerry**

**Roll number: 81006S**

**Date of inspection: 31 January 2014**



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F  
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N  
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	30 and 31 January 2014
<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 six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The teaching and learning in lessons observed was uniformly of a very high quality.
- The target language was used extensively and promoted consistently.
- The teachers of French are professional committed to their students and to the subject.
- It is very positive that students' oral competence is assessed as part of in-house examinations and that students also sit the optional oral examination at Junior Certificate.
- Whole-school support for French is very strong.
- Uptake of higher level and outcomes for students are generally very positive.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The feasibility of increasing the time allocation for French in Transition Year (TY) should be examined.
  - French teachers should use a process of self-evaluation to identify teaching and learning strategies which might serve to raise levels of achievement of very able learners.
  - The French department should devise a time-bound action plan for the ongoing development of subject provision.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Tarbert Comprehensive School provides post-primary education to students from north Kerry and west Limerick. Currently, there are 628 students enrolled. The school offers a broad curriculum which includes Junior Certificate, an optional TY programme, Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching and learning were very effective in all lessons observed.
- Lesson content was syllabus appropriate and clearly linked to planned learning outcomes. It was very positive to see the inclusion of some literature and some material which supported the development of students' cultural awareness. Content was exploited so as to take into account the exigencies of certificate examinations.
- French was used extensively in all lessons. It was used both as the medium of instruction and for the purposes of transactional communication in the classroom. It was clear that students are accustomed to this as part of normal practice. Inspector interaction with the students confirmed this observation. Students are supported to use the French alphabet and to recognise and use grammatical terminology. Very good levels of grammar awareness are also being developed. Students' vocabulary is increased by the good practice of giving explanations in the target language thus avoiding any over dependence on translation.
- A range of methodologies was used in lessons. Elements of lessons were teacher-directed and lessons also provided evidence of the use of pair and group work, and drama.
- The use of active learning methodologies created opportunities for student use of the target language. The practice of starting a lesson with oral work or the 'news of the day' is commended. In one lesson, it was very positive to see students being required to listen to information given by their classmates and to then recall it in their own words whilst in another they were required to orally summarise parts of a text.
- Lessons had been planned so as to integrate the various language skills. The value of using an approach to listening and reading comprehension which supports the development of global listening and reading skills was discussed with teachers.
- A variety of resources had been prepared for lessons. There was limited use of information and communication technology (ICT) to support teaching and learning. This is an area where there is some scope for development.
- There was clear evidence of an established quality teacher-student rapport. Teachers were firm but positive, affirming and encouraging.
- Students participated well in lessons. They demonstrated good recall and lessons were delivered so as to consolidate prior learning. Good habits are being developed with students being required to keep vocabulary notebooks. It was advised that students be further encouraged to develop the habit of note-making independently.
- Homework is assigned, prepared and monitored. Student written work is monitored and corrected. There were some very good examples of formative and affirmative feedback in student work reviewed as part of the inspection.
- Uptake of higher level and outcomes in certificate examinations are generally very positive. It was advised that learning outcomes for lessons and homework tasks be differentiated so

as to appropriately challenge learners of various abilities. It was also recommended that the French department use a process of self-evaluation to support the identification and use of teaching and learning strategies which might contribute to the raising of levels of achievement of the very able learners.

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

- French is a key element of curricular provision in the school. It is offered as part of all programmes provided.
- French is part of the core curriculum at junior cycle and is optional in senior cycle. All students are encouraged and facilitated to take the subject. Uptake at senior cycle level is quite consistent from year to year.
- Consistent with school philosophy and policy, all classes are organised as mixed-ability groups. Students are encouraged to take higher level and decisions regarding level of paper to be taken in certificate examinations are not taken too early.
- Time provision and allocation are generally very satisfactory. Currently, TY French students are allocated only one double period per week. It was advised that consideration be given to increasing this a little as regular exposure to the target language is recognised as contributing to successful language acquisition.
- French teachers are all qualified to degree or masters degree level. They are professionally committed to their subject. The teachers are members of the professional association and they also access relevant professional development.
- Whole-school support is a particular strength of provision. Teachers work in teacher-based room which has facilitated the creation of colourful, print-rich and stimulating language learning environments. The classrooms are well equipped.
- The school has established an email link with one school in France which facilitates the exchange of student correspondence. It also organises an exchange with a school in Mur de Bretagne. This exchange is a key feature of TY and, as per good practice, the trip is evaluated by the French department and the students involved. In addition, the school has had the services of a French language assistant in the past. Teachers also organise a number of co-curricular activities. The commitment and input of all involved is acknowledged.
- The school has invested considerably in its ICT infra-structure. French teachers have access to web-based resources, to e-portal for the sharing of resources and to the school's Q drive for the accessing of information relating to the needs of their students with special educational needs.
- Students are assessed both informally and formally. The French department is commended for the introduction of formal oral assessment as part of in-house examinations and as part of the Junior Certificate. It was advised that the student report should report on both a student's oral and written competence.
- To build on evident very good practice, it was recommended that teachers develop the selection of student resources and that they devise a time-bound action plan for the ongoing development of provision generally.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- French teachers work within a departmental structure. A coordinator, with a designated brief, is appointed on a rotational basis.
- The department meets regularly and records are kept. It was suggested that records might be kept electronically using an agreed template. It was also suggested that there was some scope to include a greater focus on teaching and learning at departmental meetings.
- The subject department plan includes a number of positive features such as a record of professional development activities, input on extra-curricular activities and a statistical analysis of student outcomes in examinations amongst others.
- All lessons observed had been well planned and prepared.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and the teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school 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**

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board wishes to acknowledge the positive finding of this French Inspection and wishes to thank the Inspectorate for their cooperation and professionalism throughout the process.

**Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

The Board also acknowledges the recommendations of this report and will consider their implementation into the future.

However in the context of increasing the time allocated for French in Transition Year, the Board is of the opinion that this may not be practical given the desire to offer students as wide a variety in the Transition Year curriculum as possible. Nevertheless the Board will be cognisant of this recommendation going forward.