

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of GERMAN
REPORT**

**St Mary's College,
Knockbeg, County Carlow
Roll number: 61130H**

Date of inspection: 6th February 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 GERMAN

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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| Date of inspection | 6 th February 2014 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• 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 teacher |

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning and use of the target language were of a very high standard.
- A wide range of communicative language teaching methodologies was used to very good effect.
- Student engagement and student behaviour in the course of lessons were exemplary.
- The excellent print-rich environment provided a wonderful setting for high quality learning.
- The teacher's participation in regular and a wide variety of continuous professional development (CPD) is outstanding and of great benefit to the quality of student learning.
- The quality of subject department planning and individual lesson planning was excellent.

RECOMMENDATION

- It is recommended that the assessment for learning (AfL) strategies in use be broadened to include more student self-assessment particularly in the area of the development of written skills.

INTRODUCTION

St. Mary's College is a diocesan secondary school for boys with a current enrolment of 365 students. The curricular programmes provided include the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). TY is optional for students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and teacher use of the target of the target language were excellent.
- A wide range of communicative methodologies was used to ensure that students engaged fully with the language. Particularly effective were strategies such as brainstorming to elicit prior knowledge from the students, pair work and also the use of visual images to present and revise vocabulary.
- Students had very good opportunities to work independently using information and communication technology (ICT) and dictionaries.
- The integration of the language skills was excellent in the lessons observed as students had opportunities to listen, read and speak German. This led to effective consolidation of learning.
- Lesson content in all lessons was theme based and in line with syllabus requirements. In TY the excellent practice of using cross-curricular content as the basis for the lesson was noted.
- Students' oral skills were well developed in the course of lessons and students had good opportunities to communicate in German. The excellent practice of teacher modelling the target language followed by emphasis on dedicated pronunciation exercises ensured very effective learning for the students. In interaction with the inspector, students displayed good command of oral German.
- Students' written skills in German are closely monitored and corrected on a very regular basis. This is very good practice and supportive of student learning. It is suggested that students engaged more regularly in practices associated with AfL such as self-assessment. Students should be encouraged to analyse their own mistakes. In order to facilitate this time has to be allowed in the course of lessons to guide students in this work of self-assessment.
- The quality of students learning was very good. Students were engaged and on task at all times. Very good student motivation and enthusiasm for the language were also noted.
- Very good assessment strategies were evident in the course of lessons and students' progress through activities was very well monitored.
- Classroom management was very good and students' behaviour was exemplary. Classroom atmosphere in all lessons was also very good and the rapport between teacher and students was excellent.
- A very attractive and stimulating environment has been established in the base classroom. The high quality student work, a variety of maps, posters and language learning materials have created a wonderful print-rich environment which supports the high quality teaching and learning taking place.

- Student attainment is very good and students' very high standards of German have over the course of years been recognised nationally and internationally through a variety of prestigious awards.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good provision for German in the school in terms of timetabling and resources. The school has had a German language assistant on an annual basis for a number of years through the Comenius exchange programme and this has been a most effective support for the teaching and learning of German.
- German is currently provided for all TY students as an ab initio module and these classes contain predominantly students who have never studied German before and a minority of students who have completed the Junior Certificate examination in the subject. When the numbers of students in TY who have prior knowledge of German increase, a dedicated TY class for those students should be formed.
- All first-year students have access to German and this choice is made before the school year begins. While the numbers of students taking German have increased and there is very good uptake in junior cycle, a short taster programme for first years in modern languages merits consideration. This would allow students to make a fully informed decision regarding their choice of modern language.
- There is a very good range of extra-curricular activities on offer and a huge amount of work and dedication on the part of the teacher was very evident in this regard.
- There is a whole-school assessment policy and students are assessed formally and informally on all the skills of language acquisition on a frequent basis.
- The German teacher has availed of a very significant amount of continuing professional development (CPD) in all aspects of subject specific and wider-educationally related areas. The level of engagement in such a vast range of CPD and on such a frequent basis is exemplary and highly commendable.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject department planning is excellent. The subject plan is a comprehensive document and covers a wide range of appropriate themes. The results of the certificate examinations are analysed in line with effective school self-evaluation (SSE) practices.
- The quality of planning for individual lessons was excellent and all learning materials prepared in advance were of a very high quality.

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