

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in French

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Stratford College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	1 Zion Road Rathgar Dublin 6
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61020A

Date of Inspection: 16-10-2018



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
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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.

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.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Date of inspection	16-10-2018
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

Stratford College is a fee charging co-educational voluntary secondary school with 154 students. It offers the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year programme and the established Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory; elements of good practice and areas for development were noted in all of the lessons observed.
- The target language was used by the teacher in all of the lessons observed.
- The teaching and learning methodologies observed promoted active student engagement; however, the instructional phase of lessons was insufficient to optimise the progression of new learning.
- There was strong focus on the use of student tasks to promote the productive language skills of speaking and writing; however, the receptive skills of listening and reading were not adequately integrated into the body of lessons.
- There is good leadership of teaching and learning in the school and good participation in teacher professional development.
- The overall quality of subject planning is good.

Recommendations

- Teachers should review lesson structure to ensure that the balance between teacher instruction and student activity will better support the progression of new learning.
- Teachers should adopt an integrated approach to language skills development where the receptive skills of listening and reading are initially taught and are then used support the productive skills of speaking and writing.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was satisfactory. While good practice was noted in the promotion of active learning, there was scope for development in lesson structure to ensure an appropriate balance between the instructional and activity phases of the lesson.
- The target language was used by the teacher in all of the lessons observed. There is scope to further develop this practice in some lessons by giving all instructions in the target language. Engaging with individual students and small groups and encouraging them to interact in simple French is also recommended.
- Learning intentions were established at the beginning of each lesson. The inclusion of more tiered learning intentions is encouraged in order to meet the diverse needs of the student cohort.
- A range of teaching and learning methodologies was observed, some used to better effect than others. Question-and-answer sessions supported the consolidation of previous learning. To maximise the benefits of this phase of the lesson, more opportunity for students to ask and answer questions of their peers should be considered.
- Students in one lesson created an alternative identity and introduced themselves to their peers. To maximise the potential of this task for oral skills development, the template distributed to students should be further developed and differentiated to include sections where the information sought requires full sentences as answers.
- Tasks were allocated in other lessons for the purpose of engaging the students actively and consolidating their learning. The focus on promoting active student learning is good practice. However, the timeframe allocated for the completion of these tasks was too long and compromised the instruction time available to progress new learning. To ensure a better balance between teacher instruction and student activity, a more integrated approach to language skills development is recommended. Using a range of authentic texts, teachers should first teach the receptive skills of listening and reading. These skills, once acquired can then support the productive skills of speaking and writing.
- Most students engaged well with the task in hand. They worked in pairs or groups and shared the outcome of their work with the teacher and their peers. Student errors were not corrected while they were presenting their work. Rather, a general correction of errors was planned as a follow-through activity. This is in line with good practice.
- Attention to differentiation was noted in some lessons where extension activities were given to a small minority of students. This practice merits further development as student responses in a number of lessons indicated their capacity for greater challenge. To this end consideration should be given to building up a range of supplementary tasks, some to meet the needs of students requiring additional support, and others for those requiring further challenge and greater application of transferable skills.
- Homework was assigned and there was evidence of formative feedback in some of the copybooks examined. This good practice should be further developed in all lessons through the use of more homework assignments involving the manipulation of language, albeit at a suitable level.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The leadership of teaching and learning for modern foreign languages is good in Stratford College. A strong focus has been placed on the use of the *Looking at Our School* framework

to support ongoing improvement in the quality of teachers' individual and collective practice and learners' experiences and outcomes.

- There is good whole-school provision and support for the study of French. While the hour-long lessons limit the frequency of contact with the language, the timetabling of French indicated good effort to optimise the spread of lessons across the week.
- Good practice was also noted in the provision of whole-school and in-school continuing professional development (CPD) activities.
- The members of the French Department have actively engaged in a range of CPD activities. These include attendance at the recent Junior Cycle in-service to support the implementation of the new specification for modern foreign languages in addition to a number of other professional development courses and seminars. This is commended. Teachers could now consider applying for some of the language scholarships available in Ireland and France for the purpose of engaging in further linguistic and pedagogical upskilling.
- A language learning environment has been built up in the classrooms visited, through displays of posters and samples of student work. Additional charts of key expressions which could be changed or added to would further enhance this environment.
- As part of co-curricular activities students are encouraged to undertake examinations resulting in official French language proficiency qualifications. This is commended.
- The school should consider applying for a language assistant and investigate the possibility of participating in some of the eTwinning initiatives available to support intercultural exchange and dialogue.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning and preparation is good. A comprehensive planning folder has been compiled, setting out the context of the school and the subject department. Curricular plans for each year group and a range of proposed teaching strategies have also been included.
- Greater links with the teachers of Irish in the school for the purpose of sharing good practice in the teaching and learning of languages merits strong consideration.
- Curricular planning for first-year is under way and planning templates setting out learning outcomes and assessment have been developed. To build on the good work completed to date, the members of the French department should include the teaching and learning methodologies required to support each of the different language skills for each unit of work.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The BOM is pleased with the findings of good leadership of teaching and learning in the school, good participation in teacher professional development and several examples of good practice in the teaching of French.

The BOM notes the judgement of the overall quality of teaching and learning, the report's recommendations and the French Department's response. The Board supports attempts to implement best pedagogical practices from native language support agencies where relevant.

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

The BOM is committed to the highest standards of teaching and learning.

Senior management of the school and the French Department will support and promote the integration of MFL teaching methodologies and subject planning by way of

- Whole School Support
- Engagement with relevant agencies to support Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) Developments.
- Engagement with Professional MFL Communities of Practice.

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;