

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in German

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Mel's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Longford Co. Longford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63750B

Date of Inspection: 27-04-2018



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. 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	27-04-2018
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

St Mel's College is a secondary school for boys. The enrolment is increasing and currently stands at 509 students. The curricular programmes on offer are Junior Certificate, Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year programme, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching is satisfactory.
- Student-teacher rapport was effective, teacher praise was used very well to promote student engagement and student behaviour was exemplary.
- The learning environment in the base classrooms was very good.
- Student attainment, particularly in junior cycle in the certificate examinations, is significantly below expectations when measured against existing baseline student assessment data.
- Whole-school provision for German is very good, all students in first year have the option of studying the subject and uptake of the language is increasing in junior cycle.
- The German department is engaging in very good practices as part of school self-evaluation (SSE), including detailed analysis of student outcomes and capturing student voice through surveys.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide students with greater opportunities to engage in student-student interaction and a wider range of audio materials should be used more frequently in lessons.
- More active methodologies should be used, and strategies associated with the principles of Assessment for Learning (AfL) should be used more frequently, to progress students' learning.
- Teachers need to develop the subject department plan, and an assessment policy for German, in a collaborative manner and planning for lessons should have a strong focus on learner outcomes and the appropriate methodologies to achieve these.
- As part of SSE, targets for improvement in student outcomes should be set, in accordance with available baseline data, and strategies linked to classroom practice should be identified in order to realise the requisite improvements.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to good and the overall quality was satisfactory.
- Teachers' use of the target language was good but on some occasions German was followed immediately by translation into English. This practice is less effective. In one base classroom, common phrases are laminated on student desks as an effective aid to scaffold comprehension. This good practice could usefully be extended to other base classrooms and the use of visuals and mime to support language comprehension should be increased.
- Good student use of the target language was facilitated in junior cycle through short dialogues and role plays. However, overall there is scope to develop students' use of German through increased opportunities for student-student interaction. Such interactions must be carefully scaffolded and modelled by the teacher in advance to ensure learner readiness to speak in German. In the development of oral skills, learners should be encouraged to make complete sentences in the target language.
- Students were provided with good linguistic input through teachers' use of German and some use of video clips of native speakers. However, overall there is a need to increase the provision of listening materials and particularly to provide students with a wider variety of opportunities to listen to native speakers of German. In order to develop the skill of listening, teachers should scaffold students' learning by assigning appropriate pre-task activities and should consolidate their learning with post-task activities. In the consolidation phase, teachers should replay the audio material.
- Very good efforts were made to introduce new theme-based vocabulary to students and very effective practice was noted where students were asked to recall other known words related to the new word, such as the corresponding noun relating to the verb. To enhance learning of new words students should be encouraged to record all new vocabulary and this should be assigned as homework.
- A variety of methodologies was used in the lessons observed and in some instances active teaching methods were used to promote good student engagement. More frequently, students were passive, particularly when teacher voice dominated. It is strongly recommended that more active methodologies be used in lessons and in particular strategies that are underpinned by AfL approaches.
- Teachers assessed students' learning mainly through the use of targeted or global questions. In order to maximise learning, there is a need to use strategies such as "think, pair, share" and mini-white boards, and also to provide students with the opportunity to formulate and ask questions.
- Teacher-student rapport was good, teachers frequently praised students for their efforts and student behaviour was exemplary.
- The learning environment in the base classrooms was very good. In one room, tables and chairs were arranged in a manner which facilitates student-student interaction as opposed to the traditional layout. In both rooms, a variety of student work, maps and posters were on display. Teachers would benefit from peer visits to classrooms to share the different but equally good practice in relation to learning environments.

- An analysis of student attainment in the certificate examinations, particularly in junior cycle, when measured against existing baseline student assessment data provides evidence that outcomes are significantly below expectations and that action must be taken to address the deficit.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support and provision for German are very good. Timetabling for the subject is good. Students have very good access to German. The numbers taking the subject have increased in junior cycle but there is a considerable drop off at senior cycle. Strategies to encourage students to continue learning the language should be considered.
- There are good extra-curricular activities to support students' learning, including the provision of a language trip to Germany for senior cycle students.
- The subject is well resourced but it would be beneficial to carry out an audit of the resources the school has for German and review them and their use. In the coming school year, a German language assistant has been assigned to the school through the Department's Foreign Language Assistant scheme and this should be very beneficial to teachers and students.
- The principal encourages and supports teachers to avail of continuous professional development (CPD). Teachers have engaged with some CPD but it is recommended that the German department seek further opportunities for professional learning.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject planning needs improvement. The current plans reference a series of topics and general information on methodologies, assessment and resources. Teachers need to develop a plan which focuses on learning outcomes in terms of skills development. The details for how assessment will support students' learning should be documented. Overall there should be more detail in the plan for all year groups.
- Teachers are currently working together as a modern language department and this is good practice. Overall, the German department would benefit from a stronger collaborative approach. The allocation of a German language assistant will provide very good opportunity for greater collaboration as very careful planning will be required to ensure maximum benefit from this extra resource.
- The quality of individual planning for lessons was satisfactory. Teachers need to plan lessons with a focus on what students will know and be able to do at the end of each lesson, and on what methodologies will best be employed to ensure the learning outcomes are achieved. Teachers would benefit from planning collaboratively using the methodology espoused in *Lesson Study*.
- Detailed minutes of subject meetings were made available and the principal has attended some of these meetings in order to support the subject department. The good practice of maintaining a copy of the Chief Examiners Report for German in the folder was noted. It is suggested that the information contained in this report be used to help inform improvement.

- Assessment practices vary across the German department. It is suggested therefore that an overarching assessment policy should be developed and common assessments should take place. Assessment of listening, spoken interaction, reading and writing should all take place regularly and in a formal context.
- As part of SSE, good practice of surveying students is noted and analyses of certificate examination outcomes take place. In order to improve outcomes, SMART targets need to be set as a matter of urgency and strategies relating to classroom practice should be identified to ensure the targets are realised. Target setting should be informed by existing baseline data.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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 of the school's provision in 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;