

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in German**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St Michael's College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ailesbury Road Dublin 4 DO4 A373
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60561G

**Date of Inspection: 02-10-2017**



**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. 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.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Date of inspection</b>	02-10-2017
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

St Michael's College is voluntary secondary school for boys. German is provided as an optional subject in both junior and senior cycles. The Transition Year programme is compulsory in the school and German is available to the students who have taken the language at Junior Certificate. The current enrolment is 643 boys.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good.
- Student management was very good and student behaviour was excellent.
- The quality of assessment was good with scope to develop practices associated with Assessment for Learning (AfL).
- Senior management provides very well for the delivery of German in the curriculum, and whole-school support is very good.
- The quality of subject department planning is good and planning for the implementation of the new junior cycle framework has commenced.
- Members of the German department have demonstrated excellent practice in relation to school self-evaluation (SSE) leading to highly effective changes in classroom practices in relation to the assignment of homework.

#### Recommendations

- In order to maximise the development of the learners' oral skills in the target language, teachers should provide greater opportunities for student-student interaction in the course of lessons.
- Teachers should provide students with pre-listening and post-listening activities in order to support and consolidate learning.
- Teachers should implement a wider range of strategies associated with the principles of AfL.
- To build on the existing SSE practices, teachers should carry out a comprehensive analysis of student outcomes and, with a view to sharing best practice, should engage in peer collaborative review of teaching and learning.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good and a wide range of methodologies was used to good effect in the lessons observed.
- Teachers used the target language effectively for instructional activities and for questioning. However, on some occasions, particularly in junior cycle, translation into English followed. This is less effective practice as it does not encourage students to understand German. Strategies which encourage increased use of German, particularly common phrases used in classroom discourse, are encouraged.
- Very good student learning was evident in oral responses in the target language from the learners. This mainly occurred when teachers asked individual students questions in German. In order to maximise the development of oral skills, increased opportunity for student-student interaction in the target language, particularly through using structured pair work, is recommended.
- Students were clearly motivated to learn and student motivation and enjoyment were most obvious when teachers employed active methodologies. An excellent example of this occurred in junior cycle where students had to carry out a survey with their peers in German about their daily routine.
- Student engagement in learning was evident in all lessons and students carried out lesson tasks with diligence. Student motivation was enhanced in lessons where learning was supported by the use of attractive presentations and good use of visuals.
- In some lessons, students were provided with opportunities to develop the skill of listening. In most instances, however, listening was tested rather than taught. Teachers should provide students with a variety of pre-listening and post-listening activities in order to build their capacity in this very important skill of language acquisition. In the post-listening phase, in order to consolidate learning, teachers should provide students with opportunities to re-listen to the audio material.
- Students displayed very good capacity to work independently when assigned tasks. Students also displayed good evidence of autonomous language learning through their frequent use of dictionaries.
- Teachers used a variety of good methods to assess student learning. One very effective practice observed was when teachers displayed visuals and students were asked to recall vocabulary in the target language.
- Notwithstanding the fact that continuing professional development (CPD) has been provided to staff, the use of AfL remains a particular area for development. Teachers need to use techniques in lessons such as *think, pair, share*, *show me* boards and traffic lights to maximise student learning.
- Teachers provide students with effective formative comments on their written work. Notwithstanding this, it is recommended that teachers develop a code for the correction of student written work, which would give students prompts as to the nature of the errors in their work. In order to consolidate their learning, students should be encouraged to rewrite correct forms of written expression in German following teacher corrections.
- Very good rapport between students and teachers was evident and a positive classroom climate prevailed. Some teachers used praise and positive affirmations to very good effect and

the learners responded accordingly with high levels of engagement. Student behaviour was excellent.

- The base classrooms for German provide a print-rich environment. However, the layout of desks is traditional and mitigates against an active-learning setting. The rearrangement of classroom furniture to facilitate a student-centred approach and the facilitation of the development of the key skills associated with the Junior Cycle Framework merits serious consideration.

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

- Subject provision and whole-school support for German are very good. Senior management is commended for maintaining German on the curriculum as the uptake has been low. However, in recent years uptake has increased and this is particularly evident in the current first-year cohort.
- Timetabling overall is good with the exception of the current second-year class, which is divided between two teachers. This can lead to a more fragmented experience for the students.
- Senior management has provided in school training in the area of AfL in order to support teachers' professional development.
- Teachers are commended for providing valuable co-curricular activities such as an annual German language exchange and visits to the Goethe Institute.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The quality of subject department planning is good and teachers have prepared schemes of work. A very good start has been made to developing a plan to implement the new junior cycle specification for modern foreign languages. To develop subject planning further, increased emphasis should be placed on planning for the development of the individual skills of language acquisition and on active methodologies that teachers will use to support learning.
- Teachers have not engaged recently in subject-specific pedagogical CPD; it is recommended that opportunities to avail of CPD be sought.
- The quality of collaboration between teachers is very good. Teachers meet regularly on a formal and informal basis and minutes are kept of formal meetings. Teaching, learning and assessment should be discussed at meetings, particularly in light of the new specification in junior cycle.
- An excellent example of school self- evaluation (SSE) practice occurred in junior cycle whereby one teacher surveyed students in detail about homework. The analysis of the data led to highly effective changes in classroom practice being implemented. It would be very worthwhile extending these practices across the subject department.
- As part of SSE, teachers analyse student outcomes in the certificate examinations at individual level. Teachers should extend this practice and analyse the outcomes as a subject department, look at trends over time and should set targets for uptake and attainment.

- In light of the very good collaborative practices evident, teachers should share best practice by engaging in peer collaborative review of teaching and learning.

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 of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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 <b>very good</b> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;