

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in German

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Hartstown Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Clonsilla Dublin 15
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91339F

Date of Inspection: 12-10-2017



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

Date of inspection	12-10-2017
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and relevant staff

School context

Hartstown Community School is a co-educational, multi-denominational second-level school serving the areas of Huntstown and Hartstown in Dublin 15. The school offers a range of curricular programmes, including junior cycle, the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied. The Transition Year programme is optional. The enrolment at the time of the evaluation was 1132.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to fair and in most lessons there were examples of highly effective practice.
- Effective methodologies such as brainstorming and pair work were used well to promote student engagement and the use of inductive approaches to teaching grammar in lessons was excellent.
- Excellent practices in relation to peer-assessment and self-assessment were noted in lessons.
- Student-teacher rapport was very good and classroom climate was most positive.
- The quality of subject planning for the implementation of the new junior cycle modern foreign language specification for first-year students was excellent.
- Most but not all teachers were familiar with the requirements of the relevant syllabus or the corresponding certificate examinations for class groups which they were teaching.

Recommendations

- Teachers need to make greater use of audio materials containing German texts enunciated by native speakers, particularly for students taking certificate examinations in junior cycle.
- In order to develop learners' oral competence, teachers should give students increased opportunities in lessons to engage in structured oral tasks and methodologies that involve student-student interaction should be deployed more frequently.
- Teachers should make greater use of differentiated practices and should provide students with increased formative written feedback.
- All teachers who have responsibility for teaching students undertaking certificate examinations should ensure that they are familiar with syllabus requirements and marking schemes pertaining to these examinations and avail of appropriate continuous professional development (CPD) in this regard, so as to ensure better outcomes for their students.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from very good to fair. In most lessons there were examples of optimal practice.
- Teacher use of the target language was most effective when it was used frequently and for transactional communication in the classroom. In a minority of instances, little target language was used and linguistic errors were noted which impacted negatively on student learning. Teacher use of the target language was an area for development in some lessons and teachers need to make greater use of audio materials containing German texts enunciated by native speakers, particularly for students taking certificate examinations in junior cycle.
- Good strategies to develop student use of the target language were used in lessons. However, overall students need to be provided with greater opportunities to speak in German. Teachers need to give students increased structured tasks which allow learners practise speaking German and build their confidence in spoken language.
- Teachers skilfully integrated the skills of language acquisition in lessons to consolidate student learning.
- Effective methodologies such as brainstorming and pair work were used well to promote student engagement. Given the mixed-ability nature of the student cohort it is recommended that further methodologies that support differentiated approaches to teaching and learning be deployed.
- The use of an inductive approach to teaching grammar was excellent. Students actively engaged with challenging material to deduce complicated grammatical rules. Teachers are commended for the use of such approaches.
- The effective practice of providing students with laminated peer assessment placemats was noted in some lessons. The placemats enable students to engage in peer assessment in a very structured way and this is commendable.
- Excellent practice was observed in relation to student self-assessment. Teachers provide students with self-evaluation sheets with key questions relating to learners' progress, comprehension and areas for improvements. Such strategies encourage learner self-reflection and assist greatly in scaffolding the key skill of learning to learn.
- Good monitoring and correction of students' written work was noted. To ensure that students develop the skill of writing, teachers should provide increased written formative feedback and students should be required to follow up on errors.
- Student-teacher rapport was very good in lessons. Students were provided with a secure learning environment. Student behaviour was very good in all lessons.
- The base classrooms provide an excellent learning environment for students. Teachers have ensured that students are surrounded by a print-rich environment. Very good quality posters, maps and student work were on display.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for German is good overall. Timetabling is effective and students receive appropriate time allocation. Extra resources are deployed to support oral language classes in Leaving Certificate and the increased time allocation is beneficial for students.

- Teacher deployment merits consideration and review as currently some teachers only teach one class group of German. In order to strengthen the German department, management should consider reducing the numbers of teachers teaching the subject.
- Some members of the German department have availed of subject specific CPD. However this is an area that requires renewed focus, as not all teachers were familiar with the emphasis placed on the different skills of language acquisition in the certificate examinations or the associated marking schemes. As this knowledge is paramount for teachers who are preparing students for these examinations, teachers should consult this material, which is readily available on www.examinations.ie. A copy of the Chief Examiners Reports for the certificate examinations should be kept in the subject folder and the advice therein adhered to in classroom practice.
- Good co-curricular opportunities exist to support the teaching and learning of German and it is very positive that the school has a link with a partner school in Germany.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of subject planning for the implementation of the new junior cycle modern foreign language specification for first-year students was excellent. Significant work was undertaken by a member of the German department to develop a comprehensive planning document which details all strands of the specification. To build on the work undertaken, time frames should be specified and means by which the document can be shared collaboratively across all modern language teachers should be considered.
- The quality of individual lesson planning ranged from very good to fair. Where practice was fair students were provided with materials which were inaccurate and which did not sufficiently reflect the emphases of the syllabus. Teachers should check materials for accuracy in advance of lessons and should plan according to the emphasis in the prescribed syllabus and relevant certificate examination.
- The German department meets regularly on a formal and informal basis. Minutes of meetings are kept and teachers work well collaboratively as evidenced by the sharing of individual resources on electronic platforms. Co-ordination duties are currently shared among all members of the German department and this merits review. Consideration should be given to individual members taking on the responsibility of overall co-ordinator. This would provide teachers with very good leadership development opportunities, should they wish to avail of same.
- Good school self-evaluation practices were noted in the German department's analysis of student attainment in the certificate examinations. To build on this, teachers should use the analysis to set targets for student cohorts.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals and subject 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.

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
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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board welcomes the positive findings of the report with regard to teaching and learning, methodologies and teaching approaches, the use of peer and self-assessment and planning.

It is affirming to note the inspector's very positive finding regarding student-teacher rapport and classroom climate.

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

Senior management has already met with the German teachers and it is agreed that the recommendations will be implemented.