



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: Modern Foreign Languages Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	The Glebe Wicklow Town
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	68345R
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19-05-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	10/10/2023

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 Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) 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.

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.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Anti-bullying</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">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.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the <i>Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013)</i> and this policy is reviewed annually.2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the <i>Procedures</i>) since the previous report to the board.3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils/students.

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	19-05-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including a focus group	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and MFL teachers

The focus of this subject inspection was on Junior Cycle Modern Foreign Languages (MFL) only.

School context

Wicklow Educate Together Secondary School is a co-educational secondary school under auspices of Educate Together. The school participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education for educational inclusion. This is a new school and at the time of the evaluation offered Junior Cycle and a compulsory Transition Year programme.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed in lessons was good with some highly effective practices evident. While teachers regularly used the target language, translation was used excessively in lessons and students had limited opportunities to use the target language.
- The quality of assessment practices and the provision of feedback to students varied, from the satisfactory monitoring of student work to highly effective directed feedback for improvement.
- Subject provision and whole school support was very good, senior management was very supportive of language learning in the school.
- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation in the MFL department was good
- Teachers have established a commendable range of links with schools in the target language countries, providing many opportunities for students to develop a range of junior cycle key skills.

Recommendations

- Teachers should investigate strategies for maintaining the target language as the main language of communication by both teachers and students, and provide more opportunities for students to communicate using the target language in lessons.
- Teachers should further explore ways of catering for the needs of all students through differentiating learning while maintaining use of the target language.
- The highly effective practice of providing directed feedback to students on how to improve their work should be extended.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment observed in lessons was good with some highly effective practices evident.
- Teachers used the target language in all lessons observed. However, the target language was often immediately followed by translation into English. Alternative ways of imparting meaning, such as the use of gestures and imagery and pre-teaching classroom language should be incorporated into lessons.
- Students communicated with the teacher and with each other primarily in English. In one lesson, students answered the teacher in the target language, this good practice should be extended. Teachers should teach recurrent classroom language and encourage its use by students in lessons. Students should be encouraged to communicate in the target language with the teacher and with each other according to their age and stage of learning.
- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were respectful, positive and conducive to wellbeing. Teachers created and sustained a very positive, co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment.
- Teachers shared with students what they would be learning or covering in class. As it was the end of the school year, there was a focus on revision and preparation for the examinations. In most lessons, good practice was observed with an active learning approach taken to revision, with students engaging in collaborative revision activities. In one lesson, students focussed on preparing for the state examination. Students corrected their homework and practised for the listening examination. Teachers should consider the learning intention for examination preparation lessons. For example, what are the key skills students are to learn or consolidate? Consideration should be given to self and peer correction, perhaps with marking schemes outlining success criteria.
- In order to encourage student engagement, teachers reported that they regularly co-designed success criteria with students..
- The lessons observed facilitated the development of junior cycle key skills. Students' literacy skills were developed by exposing students to a range of oral and written texts in order to encourage development of comprehension skills. Teachers should consider ways to incorporate more numeracy into lessons on a regular basis, for example by asking students to analyse charts and graphs in the target language
- The inspector conducted a focus group with a random selection of students. Feedback from the focus group varied. Most students were happy with the level of challenge and the pace of learning in lessons, however some students reported struggling to keep up with the rate at which material was covered.
- In one of the lessons observed, the teacher had differentiated learning intentions for students. This good practice should be extended. It is recommended that teachers further explore ways to cater for the needs of all students while maintaining the target language as the main language of the classroom. All students in the focus group said that they would like more opportunities to talk to fellow students in the target language.
- Students engaged in a range of activities that effectively consolidated learning. These included walking debates, student use of white boards, and pair and group activities,
- Digital technology was observed in lessons with students completing revision quizzes. The school's learning platform was used by teachers to upload classwork and by students to upload homework. Students in the focus group reported they would like further opportunities to use digital technology in lessons.
- Assessment practices varied in the copybooks reviewed. Satisfactory practice was observed where teachers monitored student work and wrote affirmative comments. In other instances, highly effective practice was noted where teachers provided directed feedback for improvement to students. Feedback was also provided digitally through the school's learning platform. Students reported that they valued individual feedback and

would like this practice extended. The highly effective practice of providing directed feedback to students on how to improve their work should be extended.

2. Subject provision and whole school support

- Subject provision and whole school support was very good. Senior management was very supportive of language learning in the school. It is commendable, given the age of the school, that two modern languages are offered to students. Currently students choose one language. It is positive that senior management plan to introduce the option for students to study two languages.
- An advisory board of studies, composed of and led by teachers drives innovation in teaching and learning. Teachers regularly share good practice through participating in observation of each other's lessons.
- The board of management and the senior management team support teacher professional development in line with the identified needs of the school.
- Deployment of teachers was highly effective and the timetabling requirements for MFL were being met by the school. Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings were taking place as appropriate.
- A ticket system to encourage positive behaviour and positive attitudes to learning was in place across the school. This was reported to encourage a positive learning environment by both students and teachers.
- At the time of the evaluation Junior Cycle was well established in the school. A range of successful whole-school co-curricular and cross-curricular initiatives that supported the development and consolidation of junior cycle skills were in place.
- Teachers had established a commendable range of links with schools in the target language countries providing many opportunities for students to develop a range of junior cycle key skills, in line with *Languages Connect, Ireland's Strategy for Foreign Languages in Education 2017-2026*. These included student exchanges, school visits and exchange of letters with penpals in the target language schools.

3. Planning and preparation

- Overall, the quality of planning and preparation in the MFL department was good.
- The quality of collaborative subject planning in the MFL department was very good. Teachers have streamlined MFL subject plans to ensure that learning outcomes within units are the same for each language, with similar activities and assessments. This good practice is commended.
- Teacher's individual planning for the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to highly effective. To expand the highly effective planning practices, all teachers should consider the intended learning and skills development of students when planning lessons.
- Regular MFL meetings are held and planning documentation showed evidence of teachers reflecting effectively on their work. Teachers participated in SLAR meetings, reporting that the process enabled them to learn from each other.
- Teachers reported that they work together very effectively as an MFL team. It is suggested that a shared MFL planning and resources folder be created on the learning platform to facilitate collaborative practices.
- Teachers had spent extensive periods in the target language countries. They regularly identified and engaged in professional learning that developed their own practice, meeting the needs of students and the school, and enhancing collective practice. This is very good practice.

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

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	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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	<i>Good</i> 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	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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	<i>Fair</i> 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	<i>Weak</i> 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Educate Together Secondary School Wicklow welcomes the report and its finding and recommendations.

Teaching, learning and assessment

It is affirmative for the Board to see that many highly effective practices were evident during the observation of lessons and that interactions between students and teachers were respectful, positive and conducive to wellbeing. The Board also welcomes the finding that teachers created and sustained a very positive, co-operative, affirming and productive learning environment.

Subject provision and whole school support

The Board welcomes the report's findings that senior management was very supportive of language learning in the school and that subject provision and whole school support was very good. It is positive to read that the Board and senior management team support teacher professional development in line with identified needs of the school.

Planning and preparation

The Board acknowledges the commendation that the quality of collaborative subject planning in the MFL department was very good and that teachers regularly identified and engaged in professional learning that developed their own practice to meet the needs of students and the school.

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

Since receiving the inspection report the school has undertaken the following measures to implement the report's recommendations:

- The MFL department have met and planned strategies to provide students with further opportunities to communicate in class using the target language.
- The school's Advisory Board of Studies has established a numeracy sub-committee to examine further ways to incorporate numeracy into language lessons.
- The MFL department are further researching ways of differentiating within the target language for students. In particular the MFL department are developing a template for individual educational plans for students.
- The MFL department are extending the highly effective practice of directed feedback to students by creating a further balance between directed feedback in copybooks as well as on the student e-learning platform 'OneNote'.
- MFL subject planning has been revised in order to streamline units of learning across French and Spanish so that the same units are being covered during the same term to enhance cross-curricular links.
- To expand the highly effective planning practices of the MFL department, all teachers of MFL are observing each other's lessons through a 'peer observation of teaching week' to consider the intended learning and skills development of students when planning their own lessons.
- The school is continuing to expand on the range of links with schools in target language countries through Erasmus Spanish and French language exchange programmes and Post Primary Ireland Language initiatives.
- Detailed findings and recommendations of the report and its relevance to teaching, learning and assessment across the school were discussed at a staff meeting on the 4th October 2023. In particular the good practice of differentiated learning intentions has been adopted across all subject departments and the highly effective practice of directed feedback is continued to be embedded through all subjects at Junior and Senior Cycle.

