

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Loreto College
Swords, County Dublin
Roll number: 60810B**

Date of inspection: 5 December 2014



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	4 th and 5 th December 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning were of good and beneficial quality, comprising very effective practice and a small number of areas for improvement.
- The target language was used routinely in teaching and the students made good efforts to engage well with it and to avoid reliance on translation.
- Opportunities were provided to engage in independent learning, especially through group work.
- A good standard of learning was evident in the students' participation and in their ability to respond to questions.
- Senior students were being coached in taking responsibility for their own learning; this practice was of a very high quality.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It would be worth examining the learning outcomes of the lesson more closely and ensuring that the learners are very clear about them, and setting time aside at the end of the lesson to review the progress made with them.
 - Differentiation strategies should be developed by employing greater variety in the questioning strategy used with oral and written questions in order to provide a greater challenge to more proficient students in particular.
 - A review is urged of the relatively low provision currently afforded the subject in the junior cycle and exploring the possibilities of increasing this.
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INTRODUCTION

Loreto College is an all-girls secondary school where Irish is a core subject on the school curriculum, the Junior Certificate, Transition Year and the established Leaving Certificate. A very high proportion of the students study Irish, almost ninety-seven per cent of the total and some of the small number who have been granted an exemption from Irish have elected to study the subject. Student enrolment for the current year 2014/15 is 626.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Irish enjoys a strong presence in the school and a committed team of teachers delivers the subject and employs a commendable interactive approach.
- Good practices were evident in teaching and learning the subject in the lessons that were observed. In all cases these practices were of good and beneficial quality, comprising very effective practice and a small number of areas for improvement.
- The target language was used routinely in teaching and the students made good efforts to engage well with it and to avoid reliance on translation.
- For the most part the teaching displayed a high capacity to accurately manipulate the Irish language, thus illustrating well to the students how to progress their own proficiency in the language to the next level.
- It would be worth examining the learning outcomes of the lesson more closely and ensuring that the learners are very clear about them, and setting time aside at the end of the lesson to review the progress made with them. Students should be given the opportunity to express their own understanding of the learning outcomes in place of the teacher summarising these with the assumption that this is self-evident to all. It would enhance students' awareness of their own learning to share the end-of-lesson review with them or to assign this task to them exclusively.
- A very clear link was made in almost all lessons with students' existing learning and this proved a very beneficial contact point in the engagement between teacher and students. This resulted in progress in learning and improved self-confidence among the learners.
- The use of information and communications technology (ICT) enhanced learning in all lessons. Prepared words and phrases and a picture sequence shown on the screen saved considerable time. A short film and internet-sourced video material provided material that was current, interesting and humorous.
- Opportunities were provided to engage in independent learning, especially through group work. For some, this was the one opportunity availed of to converse naturally with their peers. This is a valuable experience. Clearer directions should accompany group work, however, in order to avoid duplication of each other's work, as occurred in instances.
- Time management in lessons was generally good. Greater care is urged with time allocation to group work. Where a group activity is introduced to students as having a specific time limit, such as five minutes, this target should be adhered to and not allowed to over-run.
- Differentiation strategies should be developed by employing greater variety in the questioning strategy used with oral and written questions in order to provide a greater challenge to more proficient students in particular. Not all students should be expected to reach the same language level and variations in answers should be noted while all efforts displaying accuracy should be praised.

- A good standard of learning was evident in the students' participation and in their ability to respond to questions.
- Senior students were very well directed on how to assess each other's proficiency for the oral Irish examinations by marking elements of the oral test that were enacted in the class. Advice was at first given on implementing the marking scheme and the appropriate mark was agreed at the end, consistent with the relevant criteria. These students had a good awareness of their own learning and this practice was of a very high quality.
- A very positive atmosphere between teacher and students obtained in all lessons and the students co-operated fully and were very focused on the work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Good arrangements ensure an even allocation of the subject across the timetable.
- Subject provision is good in the senior cycle but junior-cycle provision is somewhat limited. A review of the provision, and of the possibilities to increase it, is recommended.
- The school's decision to have students' oral proficiency in Irish assessed in the Junior Certificate is beneficial to learners and is commended.
- The Irish department generally should consider a revision course in language accuracy from time to time, as part of its continuing professional development in the subject. This would prove to be a beneficial and enjoyable experience.
- A very measured analysis of student attainment in the subject is carried out. This analysis has shown a trend towards a fall-off in the numbers attempting higher level in the subject in the Leaving Certificate since 2013. The Irish department's examination of the causes for this indicated that students are opting to take another subject at higher level due to a recent change in points allocation by the Central Applications Office (CAO). The department is determined to reverse this trend.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The Irish department plan is of a high quality and is reviewed collaboratively. A clearer identification of the learning outcomes, from year to year, would be worthwhile in the interests of making a continuum in learning clearer. It would be worth compiling examples of student work, both written and oral, as exemplar material.
- Individual teacher planning was thorough and of a high quality. Hand-outs provided to students complemented the learning.
- Handwritten comments in copybooks showed evidence of formative assessment and a notation system gave the student clear direction in relation to work that was well done, work that needed to be improved, and how to improve the 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. 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.

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