

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Coláiste Aibhistín Naofa
Dungarvan, Co. Waterford
Roll number: 64890W**

Date of inspection: 5 March 2013



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	5 March 2013
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

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good or excellent in all lessons observed.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was excellent in all lessons observed and the commitment of the teachers to the use of the target language is commendable.
- The lessons observed featured a wide range of activities, including pair work and group work, and as a result the lessons were well paced.
- Considerable efforts are made to give Irish a high profile in the school and to give students experience of Irish as a living language beyond the classroom and this good practice is commended.
- The application of information and communication technology (ICT) in lessons is commendable, a practice that greatly enhanced students' interest in the subject.
- The layout of classrooms which facilitated collaborative learning and the availability of a collection of current reading material at the back of each classroom is highly commendable.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers regularly review class activities to ensure that real communicative opportunities are created for all students.
 - It is recommended that teachers discuss the particular learning needs of students from the Gaeltacht, from the local gaelscoil and others who have a high standard of Irish, in order to present them with appropriate challenges that will enable them to achieve excellence in their language skills.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Aibhistín Naofa is a voluntary coeducational secondary school with a current enrolment of 663 students. The school provides a wide range of programmes including the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good or excellent in all lessons observed.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication during the lessons observed, was excellent. The commitment and diligence of the teachers regarding the use of the target language in class is commendable.
- Pair work and group work was used extensively during the lessons to create opportunities for students to communicate in the target language. Such practice is highly commended. There were a couple of instances, however, where more of these types of activities could be planned for the class in order to encourage students to communicate with each other rather than simply answering the teacher's questions.
- The students made commendable efforts to speak Irish to the teachers. It was clear that a high percentage of students in classes are quite competent in the language and some come from a Gaeltacht or Irish medium primary education background. In some instances, it didn't appear that they were sufficiently challenged and it is recommended that teachers discuss this issue in order to agree strategies that will give these students an opportunity to bring their language skills to a high proficiency level. This presents an additional challenge for teachers in the junior cycle as the classes are mixed ability as far as third year.
- Students were provided with aims or learning objectives at the beginning of each lesson and in some cases these objectives were revisited at the end of the lesson to see if they had been achieved. This is good practice.
- The layout of most of those classrooms observed was very commendable. The arrangements in many cases facilitated collaborative learning and ensured the participation of all students.
- All the teachers observed were energetic and encouraging. It was obvious that there was a good relationship between teachers and pupils and discipline was excellent. The use of ICT in some lessons is commended and this added greatly to the effectiveness of teaching and learning.
- There were a few cases noted where very good cross-curricular work was taking place in the class. Students were very effectively provided with a context for the topic being taught.
- The teaching of grammar was integrated into all the observed lessons and such an approach is commendable. However, students should be reminded to always use the correct verb tenses and they should also be reminded of the importance pertaining to accuracy in spoken and written Irish. Students' pronunciation and accuracy should be corrected as necessary without impeding self-confidence.
- Additional support is often required for students who are not very competent in the language, particularly for students in the junior cycle. For example, if students are working on the formation of questions the interrogative forms should be revised in advance to ensure that they can undertake their work in the most effective way.
- Students were given very good notes and information leaflets to assist their learning during Irish lessons. The emphasis on literacy development in Irish was particularly noteworthy. The provision of current reading material at the back of each classroom is commendable. It was stated that these books are used as part of the school's strategy to support literacy amongst students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- In general, the provision for Irish on the school timetable is extremely satisfactory with an allocation of five class periods a week for all years at junior cycle level. Fifth and sixth-year students have an allocation of six periods a week including a double period. That is very valuable support for the teaching of the language at senior cycle. TY students have two periods a week, a provision that is not as satisfactory and it is recommended that school management reviews this provision if possible for next year.
- Considerable efforts are made in the school to give a high profile to the language by organising a range of activities, tours and events outside the classroom. Seachtain na Gaeilge is celebrated with a variety of activities including a treasure hunt, quiz, coffee morning, guest speakers and music. A weekly conversation club has also been established and the work of the teachers in this regard is commendable.
- The Irish teachers attend in-service courses provided by the Second Level Support Service for Irish and their experience from those courses was evident during lessons. One of the teachers provides additional courses for schools on behalf of the Service in the evening.
- The appropriate ICT facilities available for teachers and these facilities are used regularly. Additionally there are plenty of other teaching materials, including a good stock of reading material, available to support teaching and learning.
- Students' communicative skills, as well as their other language skills, are adequately assessed by means of regular oral language examinations, and teachers are commended for their work in this regard.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- It is clear that the Irish teachers work cooperatively, that they meet regularly and that they communicate closely regarding all aspects of the teaching and learning of Irish. Teachers' interest, commitment and diligence regarding the teaching of the language is commendable.
 - One teacher is nominated as coordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of Irish and that role rotates each year.
 - A comprehensive plan for Irish was made available during the evaluation. All the planning work completed to date for the teaching and learning of the language is praiseworthy. It is recommended, however, that information for differentiated strategies and approaches, to cater for the particular needs of students who have a good standard of Irish, be included in the Irish plan.
 - The principal analyses students' results in the state examinations and compares them to the national norms. It is intended that this analysis be extended from next year and that the outcomes will be made available to the staff and to the board of management. This is good practice.
 - A large number of students sit the higher-level Irish papers in the state examinations and it is clear that there is strong encouragement from the teachers to achieve this objective.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the 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.