

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

**Subject Inspection of Irish**  
**REPORT**

**De La Salle College**  
**Waterford**  
**Roll Number: 649500**

**Date of inspection: 8 February 2012**



**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**

<b>Date(s) of inspection</b>	7/8 February 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with the principal and the subject teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 12 class-periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to the principal, the deputy principal and the subject teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, teaching and communication was very good in many of the classes observed, but, in certain classes, new strategies should be implemented to ensure that translation from Irish to English is not continuously used.
- In lessons where a range of resources, including information and communication technology (ICT), was used, the effectiveness of the teaching and of student learning was greatly enhanced.
- Some pair-work and group-work was observed, mainly in the higher-level classes, but it is necessary to extend these opportunities to all classes and all levels.
- The work carried out to date on planning is commended.
- There was careful preparation and planning in advance of most of the classes observed.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that the Irish teachers agree a policy with regard to the use of the target language and that the policy be clearly displayed in the Irish subject plan.
  - It is recommended that the teachers create more opportunities for the students, in all classes and at all levels, to communicate in the target language in order to ensure that the students can speak Irish to the best of their ability.
  - A wider range of materials and resources, including ICT, should be used during all Irish classes.
  - It is recommended that more notes and support material be provided for the students and that teachers should focus on strategies to support the development of literacy and numeracy in Irish, as mentioned in the minutes of the department of Irish.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste De La Salle is a voluntary secondary school for boys, with a current enrolment of 1,174 students. The college offers the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate. It also provides repeat Leaving Certificate courses and there is a demand for these from both boys and girls.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, communication and teaching was good in many of the classes observed and effective efforts were made to avoid translation from Irish to English. In other classes, however, translation was continuously used when not absolutely necessary. In a small number of classes observed, most of the teaching was conducted through the medium of English. It is recommended that the teachers of Irish agree a policy on the use of the target language and that the agreed policy be clearly presented in the plan for Irish.
- Certain teachers would also need to improve their own oral and writing skills in Irish. There are a number of teachers teaching Irish at present who are not qualified to do so. School management should address this issue as a matter of urgency.
- Pair-work and group-work were used in some classes, especially higher-level classes, and the use of those communicative skills has greatly enhanced the students' confidence in speaking the language. Where students were afforded the opportunity of participating actively in the class, the effect of that approach was evident in the level of their interest in learning. It is recommended that communicative approaches be discussed and that the staff ensure that such strategies are implemented in all Irish classes.
- Effective use was made of ICT in some classes observed, mainly higher-level classes. This valuable resource should be more widely used, to support students' learning and to stimulate their interest in the language.
- In a few classes observed, the use of film greatly enhanced both the effectiveness of the teaching and the students' learning. Apart from films and the occasional use of ICT, very few other teaching resources were used in the Irish lessons, apart from the textbook, worksheets and the whiteboard. It is recommended that a far wider range of extra resources be used to put the subject-matter of the lessons in an interesting contemporary context for the students. It is suggested that podcasts, music, posters photographs, the communicative media, video clips, extracts from television programmes, magazines be used, as well as any other material that might be interesting for the students and thus support their learning.
- A few instances were observed where elements of Irish grammar were effectively taught. In most classes, key words were written on the whiteboard, but it is necessary to ensure that those words are taught in context and that the students can incorporate them correctly in sentences after learning them. It was felt during the inspection that students' grammatical errors should be corrected on a more regular basis. It is recommended that students be required to frame their answers to questions in complete sentences, to give them plenty of experience of the syntax and correct use of Irish. Students' pronunciation should also be sensitively corrected, without upsetting their self-confidence. Repetition could be regularly used, to ensure that the students can pronounce and use new words and phrases correctly. This should greatly enhance their self-confidence in speaking the language.

- There was plenty of material relevant to the teaching and learning of Irish on display in some of the classrooms. It is recommended that the amount of such material in certain classrooms be considerably augmented and that it be continually used to support the development of literacy and numeracy in Irish.

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

- Four class-periods per week are provided for all Junior Cycle students. There are three class-periods per week for Transition Year and five periods each per week for fifth and sixth-year students, a satisfactory provision. It is recommended that, if possible, an extra class-period per week be provided for at least one of the Junior Cycle year groups.
- Genuine efforts are made to extend the students' experience of Irish as a living language beyond the classroom. This is done by organising events during *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. The students participate occasionally in the Gael Linn debates and they are brought to performances of Irish plays from time to time. That work is commended and particularly praiseworthy is the Irish Club founded in the school this year, which convenes after school under the direction of a teacher. These activities could be built on, however, with a view to organising an extra-curricular and cross-curricular programme for Irish which would span the full school-year.
- The majority of the teachers attend the courses run by the Second Level Support Service for Irish. The support services' recommendations were not being implemented in some of the classes observed, however, and it is recommended that a visit from the support service be sought, to focus on strategies to support the teaching and learning of the language.
- Mock oral exams are organised for fifth and sixth-year students. It is recommended that students' communicative skills be assessed from first year onwards and that the results of those assessments be made available to parents in the school reports.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A co-ordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of the language is nominated from among the teachers of Irish every four years. Meetings of the department of Irish are held once a term and it was evident from the minutes that a wide range of relevant issues is discussed at those meetings.
- A plan for the teaching and learning of Irish, as well as schemes of work, were made available. It is clear that great effort and time were expended on the planning process and the teachers' work in this regard is commended. It is now necessary, however, to further develop that plan and to compile integrated schemes of work which include the following: topics and themes, teaching methodologies, teaching materials and resources, learning targets and assessment methods. Differentiated approaches and the use of ICT should form a central part of the schemes of work also.
- The number of students taking higher-level Irish in the Leaving Certificate is less than might be expected, in spite of the teachers' efforts to encourage them to keep in higher-level classes. Some suggestions in this regard were made to the school management and to the Irish-teaching staff and the recommendations in this report should improve achievement in general also.

---

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

*Published October 2012.*