

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Irish  
REPORT**

**Edmund Rice College, Callan  
County Kilkenny  
Roll number: 61510R**

**Date of inspection: 8 November 2011**



**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 of inspection</b>	8 November 2011
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with the principal and with the subject teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 class-periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to the principal and to the subject teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was good, on the whole, during the lessons observed, but teachers must make sure to avoid unnecessary use of translation from Irish to English.
- Good efforts are made in the school to provide a co-curricular and extra-curricular programme in Irish for the students and it is recommended that the teachers build on that work in the future.
- The teachers made concerted efforts to encourage conversation by asking the students questions and pair-work was used in one case, but, in general, there was a dearth of authentic opportunities for the students to communicate in the target language during Irish lessons.
- A few of the classrooms were decorated with materials relating to the teaching and learning of Irish; this should be augmented by displaying material that would help to develop students' literacy in Irish.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in a few cases observed and it is recommended that this level of usage be gradually increased.
- There was an improvement in planning since the last inspection visit (2010), but the plan for the teaching and learning of Irish needs further development.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Authentic opportunities for students to communicate in the target language need to be created, to enable them to communicate in Irish.
- It is recommended that a wider range of teaching aids and resources, including ICT, be used during lessons.
- It is recommended that planning for the Transition Year (TY) programme be done a year in advance, to allow time to compile a wide-ranging, interesting, attractive programme for the students, which will encourage their interest in learning the language.
- It is necessary to pay attention to the accuracy of language in school documentation and in material provided for students, both orally and in written materials.

## **Introduction**

Edmund Rice College is a voluntary secondary school for boys, with a current enrolment of 201 students. The school offers students the Junior Certificate and TY as well as the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the established Leaving Certificate.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication during Irish lessons was good, on the whole. Translation from Irish to English was used on an ongoing basis in certain cases and it is strongly recommended that the teachers of Irish agree a policy to avoid this practice.
- Although pair-work was used in one lesson observed and students were continuously questioned in all the Irish classes, this is not sufficient to create authentic opportunities for the students to communicate in the target language. Use should be made of pair-work, group-work, games and role-play to provide regular opportunities for the students to speak Irish. It is recommended that a policy be agreed on the use and promotion of the target language among the students.
- It is recommended that teachers require students to frame their answers to questions as complete sentences. This approach affords students more experience of Irish syntax and of composing simple sentences. Mistakes in grammar must be corrected regularly also, but without upsetting students' self-confidence or the rhythm of their speech.
- There was a good variety of activities in one lesson observed, which afforded students opportunities of practising all the language skills. It was noticed, however, that in many of the classes, there was a tendency to spend a considerable amount of time copying material from the whiteboard. Care should be taken to ensure that valuable class and teaching time is not used solely for this. It is recommended that notes and other material be provided for the students from time to time.
- There was an improvement in the use of ICT since the last inspection visit (2010) and the teachers' work in this regard is commended. This work should now be developed, however, and it is recommended that the teachers continue to inform themselves about the most effective ways of using ICT in Irish lessons.
- In addition to PowerPoint presentations, use was also made of some photographs and a poster in one case observed. In general, it was felt that there were very few interesting, attractive aids and resources in use in the Irish classes; it is recommended that a wider range of materials be used, to put the subject-matter of the lessons in a contemporary, relevant context for students.
- Repetition was used in a few lessons observed, to ensure that the students were able to pronounce words and phrases correctly. It is recommended that this approach be extended to all the Irish classes, to develop students' self-confidence in speaking Irish.
- Some work was observed in the copybooks with references to satisfactory work completed, in Irish. It is evident that homework in Irish is regularly set and corrected.

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

- Provision for Irish in the junior cycle is reasonably satisfactory, with four class-periods per week provided for all year-groups. An extra class-period should be provided for one

of those year-groups, if possible. Five periods per week are provided for fifth and sixth year students, a satisfactory arrangement. Insufficient time is provided for Irish in TY, however, with just two class-periods per week and it is recommended that the school management address this problem as soon as possible.

- ICT facilities in the school have improved greatly and it is evident that the teachers are using them; it is recommended that the teachers continue to add to their awareness of the most effective ways of using these valuable resources. It is also necessary to compile an inventory of resources available in the school for the teaching of Irish and to update that inventory annually. Teachers should always be on the alert for suitable new materials coming on the market.
- Good efforts are made in the school to raise the profile of Irish and to give the students some experience of Irish as a living language, mainly by celebrating *Seachtain na Gaeilge* and organising trips to the Gaeltacht. It is recommended that the teachers build on that work by compiling a co-curricular and cross-curricular programme for Irish, to further develop the students' interest in learning the language.
- It was reported that every effort is made, as far as school resources allow, to release teachers to attend in-service days. The Second Level Support Service for Irish was invited to visit the school this year and the management and staff are commended for taking time to focus on teaching methodologies for Irish.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A co-ordinator is nominated annually from among the teachers of Irish, to look after planning for the teaching and learning of the language. The Irish teachers hold one formal meeting each year and minutes of these meetings are available. It is recommended that, if possible, the teachers meet formally more frequently, to discuss and agree on good practice, policies, as well as communication strategies.
- A plan for teaching Irish was made available during the evaluation visit and it was evident that good work had been done on this since the last evaluation visit. The work completed to date on planning for the teaching and learning of the language is commended. That plan must now be further developed and integrated schemes of work laid out which should include details of topics, teaching methodologies, resources, learning targets and assessment methods. A detailed, separate TY plan must be provided each year for the following year's TY students.
- Third-year and sixth-year students take regular oral exams. It is recommended that oral tests be organised for all classes in the school, from first year right through, and that the results of that assessment be given as a separate mark on the reports sent to parents.
- The number of students taking the higher level in the state exams has improved in recent years and the recommendations made in this report should help to further increase that number.

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.

*Published April 2012*