

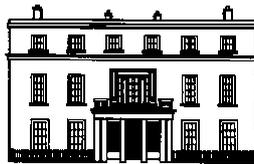
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Tullow Community School
Tullow, County Carlow
Roll number: 91356F**

Date of inspection: 13 October 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

Date of inspection	13 October 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and with the subject teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and to the teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) was good in some of the classes observed.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was very good in the vast majority of the classes.
- A good work atmosphere was observed in the classes and there was a good relationship between the students and the teachers.
- Pair-work was observed in a few cases, but, in general, it was felt that not enough opportunities for communication were provided for the students during their classes.
- A stimulating learning environment was created in the Irish classes observed, by displaying material relevant to the teaching and learning of the language, as well as students' own work.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Effective strategies should be devised and agreed to provide opportunities for the students to communicate in the target language on a regular basis during their classes.
 - It is necessary to build on the use of ICT in the classes and to use a wider range of resources during lessons, to contextualise the learning of Irish effectively for the students.
 - A policy should be agreed on the assignment of homework to the students and the kind of work to be assigned.
 - It is recommended that a comprehensive plan be drawn up for the teaching and learning of Irish in the school.
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INTRODUCTION

Tullow Community School is a co-educational school with 602 students enrolled in it. The school provides a range of programmes, including Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and some post-leaving certificate courses. The school does not offer a Transition Year at present, but it expects to re-introduce this programme in the future.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The use of Irish as the language of management, communication and instruction was very good and, on the whole, the teachers did their best to avoid the use of translation as far as possible when speaking in class. Certain teachers, however, need to refresh their oral and writing skills in Irish as a matter of urgency.
- The use of ICT was good in some of the lessons observed and its use enhanced both the effectiveness of the teaching and the students' interest in the subject-matter of the lesson considerably. Good notes on the lessons were displayed on screen for the students. It is recommended that the use of ICT be developed and extended over a period of time.
- It was noticed that, in some of the classes, there was a tendency to accept single-word answers to questions rather than requiring full sentences. The teachers should focus on this aspect of the development of oral skills and ask student to frame their answers as full sentences. This approach gives students an opportunity of getting extra experience of the syntax of the Irish language and of using it in communication.
- Effective use was made of repetition in one class observed, to ensure that students were able to pronounce new words correctly. This approach enhances students' self-confidence in using the target language and it is recommended that it be extended to all classes.
- Pair work was used in a few lessons observed, to afford the students an opportunity of communicating with each other in the target language; this approach is commended. In general, however, the pair-work was too limited to provide real opportunities for communication for the students; in some classes, neither pair work nor group work was observed in use. The teachers should ensure that real opportunities for communication in the target language are created in every class. In general, it is not enough to consider answering questions in class as authentic opportunities for communication.
- An effective, stimulating environment had been created in the classrooms observed. It is recommended that the material displayed on the walls be used to support students' learning and the development of literacy in Irish. It is also recommended that, in their Irish class, the students be taught how to use dictionaries, as well as various on-line dictionaries.
- The teachers succeeded in engaging the students in all the classes observed and student behaviour was excellent. It was evident that the student-teacher relationship is good.
- It was noted that translation is very much to the fore in the copybooks in certain cases, as a learning method and as a mode of assessment. It is recommended that this approach be reviewed and that the teachers discuss other approaches to ensuring students' understanding of varied subject matter. It was not clear in certain cases that sufficient written work was being assigned as homework and it is recommended that this problem be discussed and that a homework policy be agreed among the teachers of Irish.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision of time for Irish in the senior cycle is satisfactory, with five class-periods per week for fifth year and six periods per week for sixth year. Four periods per week are provided for all junior cycle year-groups and it is recommended that an extra period per week be made available for one year-group at least, if possible.
- Good efforts are made to celebrate *Seachtain na Gaeilge* in the school, through playing Irish music, organising a poster competition, displaying bilingual school notices, and organising table quizzes now and again. It is recommended that the teachers build on this work by providing co-curricular and cross-curricular programmes to support the teaching and learning of Irish throughout the whole year. Some ideas and suggestions in this regard were offered to the staff during the evaluation.
- Students' communicative skills are assessed in third and sixth year. It is recommended that these skills be assessed in all year-groups from first year right through and that the results of those assessments be made available as distinct items in the reports sent home to parents. Parents should also be formally made aware of imminent changes in the examination system for Irish and, accordingly, the advantages of undertaking a local summer course in Irish or of attending a Gaeltacht course.
- There is no central storage area available at present for resources for Irish, a situation which will be rectified shortly; this plan is commended. It would be advisable for the teachers to draw up an inventory of resources for Irish and a plan for further provision of resources and support materials for the teaching of the language. The list of resources should be available as part of the plan for teaching and learning Irish in the school.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A plan for the teaching and learning of Irish was made available during the evaluation. Although the work carried out to date on the plan and on the learning objectives for the junior cycle and for the senior cycle is commended, it is now necessary to develop a more comprehensive plan. As recommended during the inspection, a plan must be compiled which contains schemes of work. These schemes of work should encompass a range of topics to be covered, methodologies, communication strategies, resources to be used in class and assessment strategies for all the language skills. The existing objectives could be linked to the above-mentioned elements in the plan.
 - A co-ordinator for the teaching and learning of Irish is nominated from among the teachers of Irish and this role is rotated from year to year. It was reported that formal meetings of the department of Irish are convened once a term and more frequently on an informal basis.
 - Comprehensive planning and preparation had been completed for all the lessons observed. ICT material, worksheets and notes for students had been prepared; this work is commended.
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At the conclusion of the inspection, the draft findings and recommendations of this assessment were discussed with the principal and with the subject teachers. 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