

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Fingal Community College
Swords, County Dublin
Roll number: 70121H

Date of inspection: 27 March 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

Dates of inspection	23 and 27 March 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with individual students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Examination of students' written work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal, and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Strengths were evident in teaching and learning in all lessons.
- Teaching the subject was presented in all lessons in a stimulating, interesting way that elicited a positive response from the students.
- The quality of work in copy books was good apart from a tendency to provide too much translation to English.
- It is good that assessment of oral competence is an integral part of continuing assessment and of the summer house examinations.
- Provision for Irish on the school timetable is very satisfactory and the quality of planning work in the subject was good.
- Morale is high among the Irish teachers in the school and a positive, student-centred approach is evident in the department.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Greater attention to differentiation in learning is urged in the interests of providing an appropriate challenge to the students with best potential.
- Opportunities for occasional observation of colleagues' classroom practice, or teaching as a team, is recommended.
- Introducing the Junior Certificate optional oral Irish examination merits consideration.
- Realistic target setting is urged with a view to raising the number of students taking higher level and attainment in the subject at that level, beginning with the Junior Certificate.

INTRODUCTION

Fingal Community College is a co-educational school under the trusteeship of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee. Enrolment is inclusive and slightly over twenty per cent of students are exempt from studying Irish. The Junior Certificate, established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) are provided. It is planned to introduce the Transition Year programme from 2012/13. Current enrolment stands at 550 students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of both teaching and learning were good in all lessons observed and very good in some lessons. The evenness in the quality of the work is illustrated by the fact that this was a feature of the weakest class and of the most able class.
- The commitment to the subject and the capacity to communicate it to the students in a positive manner was evident in the classroom performance of the teachers even in the case where Irish was the secondary subject taught.
- All teachers showed an awareness of the students' capacity in the subject and of teaching methods that ensured a stimulating and interactive atmosphere in lessons. Students responded well to this approach.
- Clear learning outcomes were presented at the outset of lessons and success in achieving these was evident in due course in the responses of the students.
- The target language dominated all lessons and information and communications technology (ICT) resources were used creatively and effectively to encourage learning.
- The quality of work in copybooks was commendable and due recognition of students' work was evident, along with advice on how to improve in some cases. The work in some copybooks included much translation to English and a review of this should seek to curtail the practice.
- The quality of Irish language accuracy in teaching was generally good and very good in certain cases. Colleagues should be consulted in cases of doubt about language accuracy as collaboration among the department is clearly good.
- Greater attention to differentiation in learning would be beneficial and greater variety in the questions asked of particular students would help. Differentiation in general was good and should be developed by raising the challenge for the more capable students.
- The best lessons showed a very good variety in the learning activities and students experienced active learning. This practice was very effective with weaker students in a senior cycle class who participated fully.
- It is a positive that assessment of oral proficiency is an integral feature of the summer house examinations for all classes. It is suggested that the level of oral proficiency be indicated separately on the school report.
- The students in all lessons participated fully in learning and showed that they enjoyed it. A good learning atmosphere and mutual respect between teacher and learners was evident in all lessons.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- School management is very supportive of the subject. Timetabled provision is very satisfactory concerning the number of lessons, even daily distribution, and student access to appropriate level. Five periods per week are provided to all years.
- Morale is high among the members of the Irish department in regard to teaching the subject and a positive, student-centred approach is evident. While the challenges the subject presents to students are recognised by the teachers, they take a positive can-do attitude.
- Opportunities are provided to the significant number of students of international backgrounds to study other languages at the time Irish is timetabled.
- It is a positive for the subject that learning support in Irish is provided to first-year students with special learning needs. Resource allocations are also used to support learning in Irish as in other subjects.
- Exemptions from studying Irish are approved in accordance with the relevant circular. It is positive that students with an exemption are encouraged to study the subject and that a significant number have taken up the invitation.
- A positive and pleasant learning environment has been created for the subject in classrooms that are teacher-based and a good store of ICT resources has been developed.
- Management strongly supports staff continuing professional development (CPD). There has been a very high attendance at events of the second level support service for Irish.
- The Irish language club that has been established at lunchtime to promote Irish beyond the classroom is an excellent initiative.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Collaboration is strong in the Irish department and the quality of the department's planning work is commended. Individual short-term planning was good quality. Appropriate resources and good handouts had been prepared to support learning.
 - A common agreed plan is followed in the schemes of work and common end-of-term examination papers are used. There is appropriate attention to the assessment of all the language skills. Efforts to provide the Junior Certificate optional oral Irish examination are encouraged.
 - Strategies to promote literacy and numeracy are included in the Irish department plan. The strategies for numeracy merit further development.
 - Self-assessment and review of the effectiveness of the work of the Irish department features prominently in the plan. Teaching and learning could be developed by occasional observation of colleagues' classroom practice or by developing team teaching.
 - The position of subject co-ordinator is commendably rotated among all members.
 - Record keeping is good at department level and individually. It is recommended that realistic improvement targets be set with a view to raising the participation rates and attainment at higher level, beginning with the Junior Certificate. Success in this area would sustain and reward the endeavours apparent in the subject inspection.
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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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