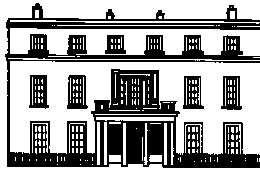


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of
REPORT**

**Blackwater Community College
Lismore, County Waterford
Roll Number: 91509E**

Date of inspection: 12 November 2014



**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	12 November 2014
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 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teaching and learning ranged between excellent and very good with some examples of excellent practice to be seen in the lessons observed.
- The use of Irish as the language of classroom management, instruction and interaction was excellent or very good in all of the lessons observed.
- There was some limited use of information and communications technology (ITC) in many of the lessons observed.
- The students were active in their learning in the lessons observed and they made good efforts to speak Irish to the teacher.
- Good efforts are being made to raise the profile of the language and to develop the students' interest in the learning of Irish as a living language.
- The efforts that are being made to encourage students to continue learning the language at higher level are highly commended.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that literacy strategies in Irish are recognised as part of the school's overall literacy strategy and as part of the school's self-evaluation process.
 - The good work that is being done to raise the profile of Irish in the school should be further extended.
 - The students' communication skills should be evaluated from first year onwards and a certain percentage of the mid-year and end-of-year marks should be based on that evaluation.
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INTRODUCTION

Blackwater Community School is a co-educational community school serving a wide rural community with a current enrolment of 793 students. The Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, the Leaving Certificate Applied and the established Leaving Certificate are available in the school.

TEACHING AGUS LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged between excellent and very good with some examples of best practice to be seen in the classes visited.
- The use of Irish as the language of classroom management, instruction and interaction was excellent or very good in all of the lessons observed. Students made good efforts in many classes to answer questions in Irish and to interact with the teacher in the target language.
- Active learning was part of every class observed. Pair work and group work were used to encourage the students to be active in their own learning. Overall, these strategies worked well and it was observed that the students worked hard during all of the lessons.
- Learning objectives were given to the students at the beginning of some of the lessons observed and this is good practice. In one instance, the learning objectives were set out based on what the students would be able to do at the end of the lesson as a result of their learning. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Good use was made of questioning to encourage students to talk and to assess the material learnt. In a few observed instances, full sentences were sought as answers to the questions. In other instances, however, single words answers were accepted, a practice which doesn't encourage students to create sentences in the target language.
- A variety of activities was undertaken during the lessons, a practice which ensured that the students' interest in the subject of the lesson was retained and the lessons had a good pace as a result. A lot of emphasis was placed on the communicative approach in a few lessons observed and this was very successful in encouraging the students to talk. Language exemplars were taught in a very effective manner in one lesson observed and, in this way, great support was given to the students' learning.
- Some material was illustrated during lessons with the help of ICT. Although the use made of ICT is to be commended, more use could be made of this valuable facility to support the students' learning and to inspire and develop the students' interest in the learning of the language.
- The students were praised continuously during the lessons and a good co-operative atmosphere was noted in the classrooms. The teachers are assigned their own classrooms and some of the rooms were decorated in a very appealing manner.
- It was perceived that the students had difficulty with Irish phonetics at times. It is recommended that repetition be used to ensure that students can pronounce new words and phrases correctly. They should be asked to put new words or phrases into sentences to ensure that they can use them efficiently as a result of their learning.
- It was also noted that a small number of students had difficulty in the correct use of verbs. This problem, and other mistakes, could be addressed as part of the school's self-evaluation process as part of the literacy strategy for Irish.

- A lot of work was completed in the copybooks observed. There was a good continuity in the work and the copybooks were corrected in a comprehensive, systematic manner.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Four periods per week are available for Irish in first year and in TY. There are five periods available for second, third and fifth year. There are six periods available in sixth year which includes one double class. This is very good provision for Irish.
- Good efforts are being made to raise the profile of the language and to develop the students' interest in the learning of Irish as a living language. Social and Irish-speaking events are organised during Seachtain na Gaeilge. A group of students are taken to the Gaeltacht and the school organises a Gaeltacht scholarship scheme. All of these efforts are commended. Some recommendations were made to the management and the staff to enhance this valuable work, for example, the creation of an Irish club and visits from drama groups.
- There are a certain amount of Irish books in the school library. This provision could be increased with the assistance of the newly published list compiled by An Chomhairle um Oideachas Gaeltachta agus Gaelscolaíochta of novels aimed at teenagers. Strategies should be put in place to ensure that the books are used on a continuous basis.
- It is intended that the Irish classes undertaking the Junior Certificate will undertake the oral component of the examination next year and this plan is commended. It is recommended that the students' communication skills in all the year groups are evaluated from first year onwards. The result from these evaluations should be displayed as a specific mark in the reports sent to parents.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The Irish teachers work together as an effective united team and there is excellent co-operation between them. One of the teachers acts as a co-ordinator for the planning in the teaching and learning of the language. The Irish department has regular meetings.
 - Teachers avail of every opportunity to attend in-service courses and school management gives financial assistance to teachers who wish to undertake a course of further studies.
 - A comprehensive plan for Irish was made available on the day of the evaluation and the work and effort carried out in relation to planning to date is commended. However, it is recommended that content from the Leaving Certificate course not be included in the TY programme. The TY programme could be made available on a modular basis to give the teachers the opportunity to teach different elements of the programme based on their own interests.
 - Excellent efforts are being made by the Irish teachers to encourage and entice students to continue at higher level for the Leaving Cert. There are three higher-level classes in fifth year this year as a result of their efforts and this is highly commended.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal/deputy principal/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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