

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Coláiste Charraig an Tobair
Cashel, County Tipperary
Roll number: 65300D

Date of inspection: 19 May 2016



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	18 & 19 May 2016
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 4 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good during all lessons observed.
- It was commendable that the use of Irish, among teachers and their students, was foremost in all classes and that, in each case, regular opportunities were created for interaction among the students themselves.
- The value attached to student-centred approaches is appreciated and this was reflected in students' general levels of self-confidence and proficiency when using the language.
- Ongoing monitoring of student progress was evident during all lessons.
- Of particular note was the openness of teachers with regard to the development of their own professional skills.
- There is good cooperation between teachers of Irish and it is good that they discuss classroom practice with each other.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that, during all lessons, particular emphasis be placed on the acquisition of phrases and forms of speech that relate to the topic being explored.
 - It is recommended that the oral competence of junior-cycle students be assessed formally.
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INTRODUCTION

Rockwell College is a co-educational secondary school which operates under the auspices of the Spiritan Education Trust. Enrolment for the 2015/2016 school year stands at 479 students. Irish is a core subject on the curriculum which comprises the Junior Cycle, Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. Given the significant number of students from other countries attending the school, 33% of the student cohort are exempt from the study of Irish. There were four teachers involved in teaching Irish at the time of inspection with varying experience of teaching the subject.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good during all lessons observed. It was commendable that the use of Irish, among teachers and their students, was clearly evident in all the classes and that, in each case, regular opportunities were being created for interaction among the students themselves.
- Effective use was made of the teacher-led approaches at the beginning of all lessons in order to share the learning intention with students, to assess previous learning and to give directions regarding learning activities.
- The value attached to a student-centred approach is appreciated and this was noticeable in the general levels of self-confidence and proficiency among students when they used the language. Nonetheless, it is recommended that teachers have greater input into co-operative learning activities and that new areas of language are presented to different groups of learners as appropriate. The complexity and the richness of the language areas in question should be differentiated when selecting which aspects of language to share with various students.
- Practice was particularly commendable when students were afforded opportunities to speak and compose spontaneously. It is recommended that such opportunities be created during all lessons so that each student will become accustomed to speaking freely, hence reducing dependence on their notes.
- Students' enthusiasm for their classwork was very good. Many students availed of worthwhile opportunities to practice using their Irish during activities which encouraged them to listen to each other, express opinions, pose questions, seek and provide help, refute the opinions of colleagues and so forth.
- During many lessons, good attempts were made to express meaning without reverting to English. As a support for the next stage in the language-acquisition process, it would be helpful if teacher-led approaches were deployed to a greater extent as a means of ensuring that groups of learners spend more time practicing the accurate manipulation and pronunciation of newly-taught phrases.
- The extra resources teachers had prepared in support of classwork were helpful. It was very good that dictionaries were available and were being widely used by the vast majority of learners.
- Ongoing monitoring of student progress was evident during all lessons. The regular monitoring of their written work is commended. Greater use of assessment for learning strategies would alleviate the burden attached to existing approaches to correction and, furthermore, students would be enabled to assume greater responsibility for their own learning.

- It was clear from their participation during lessons that many students have good levels of proficiency in Irish and high levels of attainment in the subject in certificate examinations attest to this fact.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The timetable supports the teaching and learning of Irish in that students have regular contact with the target language.
- First-year and TY classes are of mixed ability. In the other year groups, students are allocated into classes based on their ability in the subject. While the grounds for such classification in accordance with ability are understandable, the inspector was of the view that more effective use should be made of differentiation strategies so that mixed-ability classes can be maintained for as long as possible into the junior-cycle programme.
- Work done to create an attractive learning environment in the classrooms is commended. Teachers are eager to provide interesting reading material for their students and the provision of a separate section for Irish language books in the school library would support their efforts.
- Of particular note was the openness of teachers in terms of the development of their own professional skills. They are to be commended for the strategies that they have devised in order to make the learning more achievable for their students. They should be mindful, however, of the need to pay ongoing attention to the accuracy of their own Irish as they are, in effect, the primary exemplars of the language for their students.
- A comprehensive assessment system is in place in the school. The correction code developed by the Irish language teachers is particularly valuable. It is a positive step that the oral ability of senior students is assessed and now is an opportune time for this to be replicated among junior students.
- Irish teachers are commended on the programme of extra-curricular events which seeks to promote the use of Irish outside the classroom.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- It was clear that all the teachers had prepared appropriately for all stages of their lesson and had chosen activities which would assist students as they engaged with the challenge of learning.
- A need for greater consideration of the language that students would acquire during lessons was identified. In support of this, teachers are advised to place greater emphasis on the 'key phrases' that students will practice while undertaking learning activities.
- There is good cooperation between the Irish teachers and it is good to see that they discuss classroom practice with each other. This team spirit would be embedded if the position of department coordinator was assigned on a rotational basis and if common schemes of work were drawn up for all junior-cycle year groups.
- The benefits accruing from creating an action plan that focuses on areas of development, which the teachers themselves have identified and those which have been identified during the course of this assessment should be considered.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and with the Irish teachers. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management thanks the Inspectorate for the report issued. The Board is delighted that the good practices in place in the classroom were noted by the Inspector as was the dedication of staff in their on-going professional development. The high levels of attainment in the Certificate exams were noted by inspector and the Board sees these as a clear demonstration of the professional competency of the teachers involved. The recommendations are being adopted and the Board of Management will support this fully.