

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Coláiste Dún Iascaigh
Cahir, Co. Tipperary
Roll No.: 76063D**

Date of Inspection: 13 May 2016



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of Inspection	12&13 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 6 class periods• Review of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- There was considerable variation in the quality of teaching and learning across the lessons observed.
- While the use of Irish predominated in most lessons observed, it was evident that Irish was not a living language in a considerable number of classes.
- It was commendable that opportunities for interaction were created during all lessons.
- The practice of requiring students to communicate spontaneously, be it orally or in writing, was highly commended.
- Most teachers monitor their students' written work continually.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- More opportunities should be created for students to engage with the language-acquisition process by deliberately drawing their attention to elements such as accurate manipulation of phrases, development of their vocabulary and points of grammar.
 - It is recommended that modes of assessment include assessment of the oral ability of all students.
 - A more robust subject-development planning process is required in order to ensure that all department members develop a more comprehensive understanding of the most effective methodologies to deploy when seeking to develop students' competence in Irish.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Dún Iascaigh is a co-educational school operating under the auspices of Tipperary Education and Training Board. Irish is a core subject on the school's curriculum which includes the Junior Certificate programme, Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied programme. At the time of inspection, the subject department comprised six teachers with varying levels of experience of teaching Irish. 18% of the total student cohort had an exemption from studying Irish during the 2015/2016 school year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning varied across the lessons observed. Practice was good in some lessons. In other cases however, while some aspects of practice were commended, areas for development were also identified which need to be addressed in order for students' proficiency in Irish to reflect their general ability.
- The use of Irish predominated during most lessons. Where it was evident that teachers and their students were accustomed to using Irish as a living language, the need to use English was minimal, even in the case of students with lower ability levels. In other lessons, however, students' low levels of understanding and self-confidence in general suggested that they were not accustomed to the use of Irish as the primary means of communication.
- In the light of the above findings, it is strongly recommended that teachers set higher expectations for their students. All students should possess sufficient self-belief to know that they can develop their proficiency in Irish irrespective of their current standard.
- It was good that students were assigned cooperative learning tasks in which they had to help each other. In the majority of lessons, these interactions were managed effectively and, consequently, students participated actively in class work and completed the various tasks successfully. While this work was monitored continuously, greater attention could have been paid to the gaps in learning that became evident during observation.
- Considering the above findings, teachers should be more mindful of the many opportunities that arise during group work to draw students' attention to various aspects of the language, including those related to language accuracy and enrichment, which arise from their discussions with each other. It is recommended that such opportunities be availed of as a means of advancing students' levels of proficiency.
- In a small number of cases, it was evident that some emphasis was being placed on the language-acquisition process itself. In these cases, the students had to grapple with the complexities of the language while trying to produce sentences orally or when composing written extracts. This good practice is commended, particularly given that an understanding of how best to approach a listening, written or oral task was being fostered in the students.
- All teachers are, therefore, asked to place a greater emphasis on the spontaneous production of sentences and composition of questions rather than requiring students to repeat or rewrite sentences given to them, a practice which appears to currently predominate in most classes.
- It is commendable that many teachers regularly monitor their students' written work. As a means of promoting independent learning, it is recommended that all teachers include clear guidance regarding areas for improvement in written feedback given to students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Senior-cycle students have an Irish lesson every day. This practice is commended. It is also good that the revised timetable for the coming school year will give junior-cycle students additional contact with the target language.
- A banding system is in place across all junior-cycle year groups and, consequently, students are allocated to classes in accordance with their ability in the subject. The proposed revisions to the timetable for the coming school year will allow for the formation of mixed-ability classes in first year. Maintaining this system of distribution, for as far into the junior cycle as possible, is recommended.
- Many teachers have attended training workshops, provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST), that focus on the teaching of Irish. This is indicative of teachers' general commitment to their own professional development. In view of the areas for development identified during this evaluation, it would be worthwhile to now focus continuing professional development activities on the following areas: differentiation strategies, assessment for learning strategies as well as developing teachers' own proficiency levels in Irish.
- Even though classrooms are not teacher-based, a commendable effort is made to create a vibrant learning environment in classrooms. The reference material on display is valuable and it is also good that samples of the students' own work can be seen.
- In-house and class examinations primarily involve testing students' written and listening ability. It is strongly recommended that assessment approaches include assessment of the oral ability of all students.
- Teachers are commended for providing a programme of extra-curricular activities that creates opportunities for students to use their Irish outside of classroom settings.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- It was reported that department members work well together. Nevertheless, subject-development planning was identified as requiring improvement. While the minutes indicated that themes that are topical at whole-school level are explored at these meetings, items relating to the teaching and learning of Irish need to be explored more deeply. Engagement in such dialogue would ensure that all teachers would have a shared understanding of the most effective methods to deploy when seeking to develop all students' competence in the language.
- There was good preparation for the majority of lessons. The steps of the lesson had been considered in advance and in many cases, additional resources had been prepared to support the learning process. In many lessons, however, a need was identified for more comprehensive consideration of the aspects of language that students would acquire. More prior thought should also have been given to the learning activities that would best facilitate students' engagement with the language-acquisition process during lessons. In view of this, it is recommended that the acquisition of language structures be included as a learning intention for all lessons.

At the end of the evaluation draft-decisions and draft-recommendations of the evaluation were discussed with the principal, the deputy principal and the Irish 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.

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