

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Kildare Town Community School
County Kildare**

Roll number: 91530S

Date of inspection: 07 February 2013



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

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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| Dates of inspection | 6 and 7 February 2013 |
| Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods | <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with students• Examination of a sample students' work & school journals• Feedback to individual teachers• Feedback to principal and teachers |

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in more than half of all classes observed. In the remaining classes quality was either weak or fair.
- Student behaviour was very good and students' efforts were well praised.
- Samples of students' work showed that their work is monitored rather than corrected.
- The good practice of assessing students' oral skills is carried out in every year group.
- Worthwhile efforts are made to reduce the number of students undertaking the subject at foundation level.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the subject department builds on the experience of differentiated learning observed in some lessons in order to ensure high but appropriate expectations of student progress, and to increase numbers of students undertaking higher level Irish.
- It is recommended that management considers ways of facilitating formal meetings of the Irish department more regularly during the year to discuss approaches to teaching and learning, including assessment.
- It is recommended that results of analysis of student achievement in state and house examination are used within the subject planning process and that practices be developed in relation to monitoring and reviewing the implementation of the plans set out.

INTRODUCTION

Kildare Community School is a coeducational post-primary school with a current enrolment of 618 students. The school, established in 2011 following the amalgamation of three post-primary schools in Kildare town, operates under the patronage of County Kildare Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and the Diocese of Kildare and Leighlin.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or very good in more than half of all classes observed. In the remaining classes quality was weak or fair.
- Learning objectives were clear and were shared with students at the beginning of lessons in more than half of the classes observed. Learning outcomes should be referred to at appropriate points during, or at the end of, the lesson. This practice was observed in a few classes.
- Work was well structured in most cases.
- In a minority of lessons no new content was presented to students. In order to ensure progress in learning and to make effective use of the available class contact time, students should achieve new learning in every class.
- In most classes students were involved in a variety of learning activities and exercises, either individually, in pairs or in groups. This approach supported their active participation in learning.
- When students participate in pair or group work teachers must ensure that there is an information gap in the task, that members of the group have definite roles and that there is a timeframe for the work. This was achieved in certain cases.
- In some cases efforts were made at differentiated learning using questioning. In order to ensure high and appropriate expectations of progress based on students' levels of proficiency in the subject, it is recommended that the subject department develops and implements practices to support differentiated learning in class work and in homework.
- In a few cases, very good work was done to develop student accuracy in grammar.
- Students received praise for their efforts and their behaviour in all classes was very good.
- There was excessive emphasis on translation to English in certain instances. The use of alternative strategies to support students in acquiring the language, as was observed in other classes, is strongly recommended.
- It was evident in some classes that teachers have begun to devise strategies to develop students' literacy skills. More extensive use of these strategies is recommended. When keywords are introduced, the definite article along with the singular and plural forms of the noun should be provided to students in addition to the form in the relevant case (singular and plural).
- From samples of students' written work it was evident that their work is monitored rather than corrected. It is recommended that correction based on the principles of assessment for learning is used. This approach was evident in a minority of the examples examined.
- An oral Irish examination is carried out for students in every year group. This is good practice.

- A review of student participation in the certificate examinations shows that the number of students undertaking higher level Irish should be increased. School management and the subject department are in agreement on this objective. The subject department is to be commended for the efforts made to reduce the number of students undertaking foundation level.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Very good provision of resources is made in the school. These include information and communications technology resources and it is to be commended that plans are in place to provide a collection of reading material in Irish for the school library.
- Timetabled provision for Irish in senior cycle is very good. In junior cycle, the feasibility of increasing the time available for the subject in at least one year of the cycle should be explored.
- Approximately ten per cent of students have an exemption from studying Irish.
- The level of proficiency in Irish of almost all teachers was satisfactory for teaching the subject. In the interests of facilitating student learning, attendance at an Irish course to enhance skills is recommended in one case.
- A planning meeting is held in the Irish department once a year. It is recommended that management reviews this arrangement so that the subject department is given opportunity to organise formal meetings on a more regular basis during the school year.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The role of subject coordinator is rotated among teachers on an annual basis. It is recommended that: teachers undertake the role for a three-year period; development targets and action plans are set out for teaching and learning Irish for each period.
- Subject plans are at a variety of stages of development. The use of a common template for short-term plans, including Transition Year, is recommended. Existing ICT resources should be used for this work and for sharing and amending documents between meetings.
- It is recommended that monitoring and reviewing practices of the implementation of subject plans be developed and decisions and changes noted in the documents.
- As part of the planning process it is recommended that analysis of student achievement in house and state examinations is used to identify strengths and development targets.
- Teaching and learning methodologies and strategies should be a permanent item on the agenda for meetings of the subject department. Teachers should share feedback from continuing professional development activities in which they participate.
- It is recommended that agreed strategies for the development of student literacy and numeracy skills be integrated with the subject content.
- When planning for learning in first year, it is recommended that the department consults the primary curriculum for Irish – *Curaclam na Bunscoile: Gaeilge*; that a specific module be developed for implementation in the first term so that baseline data is available for Irish, and so that systematic planning can be achieved for the development of learning for the remainder of the year.

- Individual lessons were well planned and prepared in most cases. This included appropriately chosen resources to support learning.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The Board welcomes the acknowledgement that the provision for Irish in the school is very good and that the subject is well resourced.

The Board of Management is reflecting on the findings and recommendations contained in the report and it undertakes to implement the recommendations of the report as far as is practicable.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Since the inspection occurred the following recommendations have been implemented:

- Whole-School Professional Development has been arranged on differentiated teaching and learning.
- Formal subject planning meetings of the Irish department have been held twice during this term.
- Student attainment in state examinations and the levels taken have been analysed by the subject department and incorporated into subject planning.