

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Coláiste Muire
Ennis, Co. Clare

Roll Number: 61930Q

Date of inspection: 4 May 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	2 & 4 May 2012
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 nine class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning techniques used in the vast majority of the classes were of an exemplary or very good standard, there is a need to extend this practice to all the Irish classes.
- There is very favourable provision and support for teaching and learning of Irish in the school.
- The department has agreed developmental priorities and it would be worth devising practical achievable steps to implement these priorities.
- Very good short-term planning and preparation had been carried out for all lessons during the inspection.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that, at the level of the Irish department, the focus be on the sharing of teaching and learning methodologies among department members.
- It would be beneficial to consolidate students' ability in the four main language skills more evenly in all assessment procedures.
- The department is advised to develop more tools for assessment of learning and for learning.
- It would be well worth while undertaking development of the curriculum plans to teach the four main language skills and different aspects of the courses in an integrated and thematic manner.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Muire, in Ennis, County Clare is a secondary school for girls. It is one of five secondary schools providing second level education for the catchment area of this town. There is 681 students attending the school and the Transition Year programme is part of the school curriculum on optional basis. Máireád Ní Ghráda, who wrote the play 'An Triail', was a past pupil of this school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from exemplary practices to very good methodologies in the vast majority of the lessons, with a minority in need of significant development.
- Among the examples of excellent practices observed were: detailed information being given to students at the start of a lesson on differentiated learning outcomes; good links being made with previous learning, purposeful pace, a range of learning styles and language skills being taken into account, and pair work and group work to stimulate active learning
- A consistent feature in the best lessons was the good balance between whole class work and task-based work. There was also very good scaffolding of students' learning needs during the completion of these tasks.
- The following recommendations for improvement are made for teaching and learning: not to undertake a new topic before performing brainstorming session first; achieving clear learning and teaching objectives during each lesson; implementing a pre-communication period for each language skill as well as serving the students' learning needs during task-based work, including aural comprehension work.
- The atmosphere in all lessons was friendly and supportive of learning. The teachers knew all the girls in their care very well.
- The vast majority of teachers had good language grading skills, there was ordered use of the board and the majority of teachers expected the students to be at ease with the classroom vocabulary.
- Although good efforts were made to provide rich learning environments in the classrooms, there was plenty of scope for further development in this area.
- The random sample of journals observed showed that there were variations in the practices regarding assignment of homework to the students. The department is advised to discuss their expectations regarding homework for the various year groups as well as reinforcing the students' ability in all the skills through the medium of homework.
- Good examples of assessment for learning were observed in student copybooks, as well as mechanical corrections with explanations of the errors and monitoring with a tick or date. It is recommended that each teacher reflect on their practice in these areas to ensure that the students are receiving guidance for learning from the assessment process.
- There was also evidence in the copybooks that an integrated and thematic approach is not always in use to teach the language and that grammar is being taught formally. It is recommended that the planning for teaching and learning the language should seek to ensure that teachers are not overly-dependent on such techniques.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision and support provided for teaching and learning Irish in the school is very satisfactory.
- The students undergo an examination at the end of first year and the students are banded based on the results of that examination according to State examination levels. All students are organised in this manner from first year on, except in Transition Year and in Leaving Certificate Applied. It is recommended that this be reviewed and that students not be divided so early in their secondary education.
- There is a long tradition in the school of participating in a wide range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities. In-school projects are organised and students also participate in competitions and activities organised outside the school also.
- All students undergo common summative assessments twice a year as well as regular tests. An imbalanced weighting was given to writing skills to date but it is commendable that the department is making an effort to give more equal recognition to each language skill.
- It is commendable that the school management analyses and tracks the results achieved by students in the certificate examinations. It is recommended that the department itself compare this analysis to the national average marks on an annual basis.
- The school has developed good facilities and resources for the teaching and learning of Irish, and these supportive resources are renewed continually, including electronic resources. The department is recording an archive of the students' oral skills; this is a commendable project.
- All teachers of Irish in the school are graduates in Irish. There has been a good attendance by the teachers at courses run by the Professional Development Service for Teachers for Irish since 2008. It would be well worth while discussing the content of the courses as part of the planning for teaching and learning the language.
- Eight per cent of the total number of students enrolled in the school has been given exemptions from Irish by the school in accordance with the provisions of Circular M10/94.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The Irish plan was of a good standard regarding the organisational details of the department and the curriculum plans. It is also commendable that the department has started to develop strategies to support the students' literacy and numeracy skills.
- It would be beneficial to develop all curriculum plans to teach the four main language skills and different aspects of the courses in an integrated and thematic way.
- A good effort has been made in the Transition Year plan to provide an innovative teaching and learning experience during this year. It is recommended that there be higher learning expectations for the students during this year, especially in the context of the

timetable provision. A language learning log such as the *European Languages Portfolio* www.coe.int/portfolio would be useful for this project.

- The department has agreed an action plan. It is recommended that practical achievable steps be devised to achieve current priorities.
- Very good short-term planning and preparation had been done for all lessons during the inspection. When short-term planning is being undertaken it is important to differentiate learning outcomes suitable for the range of abilities in the different class groups, in line with practice observed in half of the classes.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.