

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of: Irish
REPORT**

**Gairmscoil Chú Uladh
Béal an Átha Móir, An Clochán, Lifford
County Donegal
Roll Number: 71242B**

Date of inspection: 10 September 2014



**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

Date of inspection	10 September 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 four class periods• Review of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Effective practice was seen in the quality of the teaching and strengths were evident; student answers indicated good progress in learning.
- Use of differentiation was good in some cases; opportunities were provided to practise active learning and students were obliged to demonstrate their knowledge before teachers improved on it.
- An analysis of participation and attainment in the subject in certificate examinations shows a good portion of students are attempting higher level and are doing well.
- The time allocated to the teaching of Irish in the Leaving Certificate is fully appropriate; the provision in the junior cycle and in Transition Year is fair to middling.
- Co-curricular subject opportunities are available for students with the support of teachers.
- It is good that there are high expectations for participation at the highest level in the subject, on a par with the students' ability, and for attainment in the subject in certificate examinations.

MAIN SUGGESTIONS

- Students should be trained to recognise the quality of language in their own work, whether oral or written, and should be guided to take this quality to the next level.
 - A review of the moderate provision for Irish in the junior cycle is recommended, with a view to increasing it, in the case of one, at any rate, of those years.
 - The assessment part of the subject plan is the aspect most worth developing, especially the assessment, affirmation and reporting on the students' capacity in the spoken language.
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INTRODUCTION

Gairmscoil Chú Uladh is an All-Irish co-educational post-primary school under Donegal Education and Training Board in Gaeltacht Láir Thír Chonaill. The school participates in the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion, Delivering Quality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). The students' linguistic backgrounds are very different; there is an almost equal division of students from an all-Irish and an all-English primary school background, but only a very small minority of these would speak Irish at home. The Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the optional Transition Year, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) are the programmes provided. There are 214 students enrolled in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Effective practice was seen in the quality of teaching in all of the lessons observed and strengths were evident in every case. Good care was taken to include all the language skills.
- Evidence of the quality of learning was fairly limited as the students were somewhat quiet but when asked a question they were well able to give a satisfactory answer which indicated they were progressing well in learning.
- Learning outcomes were shared with the class at the beginning of the lessons and most were clear and worthwhile; these goals should be very clear, and should be refreshed during the lesson and, to this end, students should also be asked to articulate them.
- The quality of language used in teaching was good throughout and of high quality as regards structure, richness of vocabulary, and spoken and written accuracy in particular cases.
- Differentiation was used well in some cases; a good example of this was the higher order question: *'What is the line in the poem you like best, and why'?* In another case two written texts were provided on the same topic and students' attention was directed to language awareness of the two pieces. It would be good to develop these practices.
- Opportunities were given to practise active learning and students were obliged to demonstrate their knowledge to a certain extent before teachers improved on it.
- Attention was paid to expanding vocabulary in all lessons and students were directed to the vocabulary needed to answer satisfactorily the questions they were going to be asked.
- The role of students in groupwork should be defined more clearly so the appropriate responsibility would be given to each group member and not too big a workload would fall on one or two students, even if they are happy to do more than their share.
- Students should be trained to recognise the quality of language in their own work, whether oral or written, and should be guided to take this quality to the next level without denting their self-confidence.
- Good use was made of information and communications technology resources (ICT) and more use could be made of them to challenge students with additional aspects of the spoken language.
- There was an atmosphere of mutual respect and cooperation during lessons and it was noted that encouragement was given regularly to students' efforts in answering.

- The learning environment provided for the subject in the classroom was good in general, and of high quality in one case in respect of the stimulating material that was displayed.
- An analysis of participation and attainment in the subject in certificate examinations shows that a good portion of students are undertaking higher level and are doing well.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision of class periods per week for the teaching of Irish in the Leaving Certificate is fully appropriate. However, the provision for the subject in the junior cycle and in the Transition year is fair to middling, taking into account that all the lessons last just thirty-five minutes.
- A review is recommended in order to increase the moderate provision of four periods a week which is available for Irish at present in the three years of the junior cycle, in the case of one year at any rate.
- There are good ICT resources in the school, providing modern conditions for the teaching and learning of Irish. The school avails of good opportunities in this area. These included a live transmission of the Raidió na Gaeltachta current affairs programme *Barrscéalta* from the school itself.
- Co-curricular subject opportunities are available with the support of teachers. Examples of these are the Clár Raidió Gael Linn 2014 competition and a senior student taking first prize in the poetry competition *Cuisle*. These achievements are commendable.
- It is appropriate that the promotion of reading in Irish in first and second year is central to the whole-school reading policy.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of the subject plan for Irish was adequate. It is commendable that the plan is a cooperative endeavour and that the members of the department have regular meetings. This is evident in the recording of minutes of meetings in the subject department.
- The assessment part of the subject plan is the aspect most worth developing, especially the description and the approach to be implemented by teachers regarding assessment, affirming and reporting of students' competency in the spoken language in all years, over and above good direction for the Leaving Certificate oral examination.
- The Transition Year plan is well focused on studying and celebrating the authentic language of Gaeltacht Láir Thír Chonaill.
- There is scope for more clarification and differentiation of the learning outcomes that are laid out for each year in the subject plan.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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