Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Coláiste Cois Life
Lucan, Co. Dublin

Roll number: 76065H

Date of inspection: 3 May 2012
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

<table>
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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>2 &amp; 3 May 2012</th>
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| **Inspection activities undertaken** | • Interaction with the students
• Review of samples of the students’ work and of samples of their school diaries
• Feedback to individual teachers
• Feedback to the principal, to the deputy principal and to the teachers
• Review of relevant documents
• Meeting with the subject co-ordinator and with the principal
• Observation of teaching and learning during six class-periods

MAIN FINDINGS

• There was a range of quality in the teaching and learning observed – very good in one third of the classes, good in another third and fair in the remaining third.

• Very good use was made of information and communication technology to facilitate and reinforce the learning in every class.

• In all classes, students’ attention was focused on accuracy of Irish.

• Practices concerning homework and corrections are very good and account is taken of the main language skills in the assessment process.

• Very good progress has been made in implementing the recommendations of the inspection conducted in 2004.

• The planning documentation indicates that there is scope for further development and for creation of further challenges for the students in learning Irish as a subject.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• It is recommended that planning be reviewed, focusing in particular on the development of learning in making the transition from primary school to first year in post-primary, and again in Transition Year, and that the teachers consider using a subject-based approach such as Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) for that purpose.

• It is recommended that it be the normal practice to monitor and review the plans and that this work be linked to assessment of learning.
INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Cois Life is a co-educational Irish-medium post-primary school. The school functions under the patronage of County Dublin Vocational Education Committee and there are 419 students on the roll. Transition Year is a compulsory element of the educational programme of the school. The last inspection of Irish in the school was conducted in 2004.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There was a range of quality in the teaching and learning observed – very good in one third of the classes, good in another third and fair in the remaining third.

- In the majority of cases, the learning outcomes expected were shared with the students at the start of class and a few excellent examples of this practice were observed. To perfect the practice, the teachers should refer back to the expected outcomes at appropriate stages during the class or at the end.

- In the good and very good classes observed, the structure and pace of the lessons were appropriate, there was a suitable learning challenge in the content, the teachers had chosen appropriate teaching methodologies and strategies and there was a creative approach to revision.

- In all classes, various tasks were set for students, who sometimes worked in pairs or in groups, but these were not always effective in generating conversation or in promoting learning. There should be an information gap in the tasks to give rise to discussion among the students, group members should have specific roles and there should be a strict time-limit to the tasks.

- Information and communication technology aids and resources were effectively used in every class to support the learning.

- Attention was paid in all classes to the accuracy of students’ Irish, both oral and written.

- An appropriate range of questioning was used to assess the learning in some cases. It is recommended that this aspect of teaching practice be further developed, focusing in particular on questions that will develop students’ higher-order thinking skills. It is also necessary to allow time for students to frame an answer.

- An analysis of student achievements in the certificate examinations indicates that their levels of participation in the examinations in both cycles are very good.

- The management recognises that students’ levels of achievement in the highest grades must be carefully monitored, especially in senior cycle. An analysis of the results achieved by students in the house examinations should also be used in the planning process.

- The department of Irish implements the school’s homework policy effectively. Homework is set and corrected regularly and those corrections which were helpful and which accorded with the principles of assessment for learning were of a very good quality.

- The main language skills are taken into account in assessing student learning.

- In almost all cases, the teachers keep very good records of students’ achievements in various assessments.
SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Very good progress has been made in implementing the recommendations resulting from the inspection of Irish in the school in 2004.

- In accordance with its specific aims, the school operates policies and strategies which support the teachers and the management in providing a very good programme of co-curricular and extra-curricular events, to help the students to acquire a command of Irish and to develop their experience of and participation in events related to Irish culture.

- A very good provision of aids and resources is available to support the teaching of Irish. It would be worthwhile for the teachers of Irish, in collaboration with the management, to consider the possibilities of providing a selection of Irish books for the school library.

- There is a very good provision of time for Irish on the school timetable.

- In the next review of the homework policy, it is recommended that in accordance with the good practice in operation in the department, guidance on correction practice be included in the document concerning the teacher’s responsibilities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- As recommended, the department of Irish now operates on a formal basis.

- The staff have decided to assume the role of subject co-ordinator in turn. A three-year term is recommended for this role, to support planning for the development of the subject.

- In accordance with a previous recommendation, the staff undertake joint planning for the teaching of the subject and for the assessment, in the case of each year group.

- The minutes of department meetings indicate that, as recommended, teaching and learning strategies were discussed at those meetings. It is recommended that this be a regular item on the agenda and in order to reinforce good practices and extend them throughout the department, the teachers, in collaboration with the management, should develop the practice of peer observation.

- The minutes of one meeting indicate that a start has been made on integrating a policy on the improvement of literacy and numeracy skills into the subject.

- The subject plan is of a reasonably good standard. However, the material laid out, especially the programme set out for first year, is not sufficiently challenging for the students and does not serve the graded development of learning. It is recommended that the planning be completely reviewed, so that it would better serve the needs of the students in the school and be more precisely focused on developing their command of Irish.

- To plan more effectively for the development of learning in Irish, while also supporting students’ access to the other subjects on the curriculum, it is recommended that development targets be agreed and a plan of action laid out complete with strategies and target dates.

- As a starting point for the development of learning, it is recommended that the teachers consult Curaclam na Bunscoile: Gaeilge (The Primary School Curriculum: Irish) and
other subjects to compile a specific learning module for the students in their first term, first year. A common assessment should be used at the end of that term to assess their ability in Irish and the results of that assessment used as a base for planning their learning for the remainder of the school year. It is recommended that an approach based on Content and Language Integrated Learning (CLIL) be used here and in Transition Year.

- It is recommended that the Transition Year plan be totally reviewed in order to make the material innovative and that the students be given an input into its design. Instead of working on material which belongs to the prescribed Leaving Certificate course, it is recommended that teachers avail themselves of the year to develop the students’ experience of different genres of writing in Irish in various media.

- It is recommended that a common template be developed for planning, which will allow for specifying the learning outcomes at different stages of the learning and using them as assessment criteria. It is recommended that, as part of this exercise, monitoring and review practices be developed and their results noted in the documents.

At the conclusion of the evaluation, the draft findings and recommendations of this assessment were discussed with the principal, the deputy principal and with the subject 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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