

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Irish**  
**REPORT**

**Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair**  
**Na Doirí Beaga, County Donegal**

**Roll number: 91409A**

**Date of inspection: 12 May 2016**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	11,12 May 2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to individual teachers</li><li>• Feedback to the Irish teachers and senior management</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching was excellent in the majority of lessons observed and beneficial in all cases.
- The quality of learning was good in more than half the lessons, excellent in another significant minority of lessons and fair in one case.
- The Irish being taught was of a high quality; learning was evident especially when the lesson had high expectations and where high quality Irish was expected from the students.
- Irish has a very high standing as a curriculum subject and as the working and communication language of the school and is strongly supported by senior management and the Irish department.
- The provision for Irish on the school timetable is excellent as regards the number of class periods allocated to it on the timetable and how this provision is evenly distributed on a daily basis.
- An analysis of student attainment in the certificate examinations in Irish showed very positive trends.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that '*An Foclóir Beag*' be consulted on a regular basis from first year onwards to enable students to become familiar with giving and seeking explanations in Irish rather than using English translations.
  - It would be well worth collecting exemplars of the best of the students' written and oral work for use as teaching resources and to provide inspiration for other students in their learning.
  - It would be worth including a clearer delineation of the incremental progress to be made in the learning objectives from year to year.
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## INTRODUCTION

Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair is an all-Irish co-educational post-primary school situated in a strong Gaeltacht area. Irish is on the Junior Certificate, established Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programmes; a significant number of students take the optional Transition Year programme. 379 students are registered for 2015/16. The school counts 67% of students as native speakers, a small decrease from the 70% in the previous subject inspection.

## TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was excellent in the majority of lessons observed and beneficial in all cases.
- The quality of learning was good in more than half the lessons, excellent in another significant minority of lessons and fair in one case.
- The Irish being taught was of a very high quality; learning was evident where the lesson had high expectations and where high quality Irish was expected from the students. This was done effectively in a positive manner, by continuously presenting the students with alternative language choices as an aid to enriching the students' language foundation. This approach is highly commended and the practice of providing English translations of Irish words, as happened in one case, should cease.
- It is recommended that '*An Foclóir Beag*' be consulted on a regular basis from first year onwards to enable students to become familiar with giving and seeking explanations in Irish rather than using English translations.
- The lessons reflected the subject plan well, both as regards reviewing various aspects of poetry and prose criticism, reading new literary material or composing a descriptive account. The students found all the material challenging and demanding, as should be the case.
- In the best lessons, the expected learning outcomes were clearly conveyed to the students at the beginning and verified with the class. The learning activities were well measured and all this helped in reviewing, towards the end of the lesson, the amount of progress made in learning.
- In one case, the subject matter of the lesson itself, as well as the language and concepts being discussed were too demanding for the age group. In another case, an aspect of literature was reviewed without enough direction having been given at the outset as to the expected achievement.
- In certain cases, excellent use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) resources, excellent photographs that stimulated input from students as a well known poet recited his poetry. In another case a video clip was shown, which was relevant, but in English. Appropriate clips in Irish should be used.
- In two senior classes, the examples of Irish being shared with the students and being put forward as a goal for them were of the highest quality in relation to the use of adjectives and idioms. The students were doing their best dealing with these both individually and in group work which was effectively directed and showed that the use of very rich language was common practice.
- In certain classes, the students were given thorough guidance on the best way to answer certificate examination questions by discussing higher order questions; the beneficial effect of this guidance was evident in the students' oral and written answers.

- The copy books examined contained comprehensive work; helpful guidance notes were frequently written to improve the quality of the written work. In certain cases, more attention needed to be given to the requirements of the official standard for Irish; that particular language register should be distinguished from colloquial speech, such as *‘Bhain mé an-taitneamh astu’* instead of *‘Bhain mé an-taitneamh as-tú’*. It is recommended that evidence be seen in the copy books that corrections were read and noted; this can best be done by rewriting the corrections.
- It would be well worth collecting exemplars of the best of the students’ written and oral work and use them as teaching resources and as an inspiration for other students.
- A good atmosphere prevailed in the lessons as well as a lively approach that praised the efforts of the students and elicited good efforts from them.

#### **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Irish has a very high standing as a curriculum subject and as the working and communication language of the school and is strongly supported by senior management and the Irish department.
- The school staff have a very good understanding of the vital role the school plays in helping to maintain Irish as the main language of the Gaeltacht community; as an indication of this the school had a vision statement as a Gaeltacht school.
- Students regularly participate in a wide range of co-curricular competitions, both cultural and language events. The school collaborates with a local language planning working group.
- In 2015/16 an assistant was appointed under the language assistants scheme to help identified students with little Irish to make progress in their acquisition of the language. The school’s review of the initiative’s operation indicated that it was a great success.
- The provision for Irish on the school timetable is excellent as regards the number of class periods allocated to it and how this provision is evenly distributed on a daily basis.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- In general, the quality of the Irish department’s planning work was good; the aims, objectives, teaching goals and learning outcomes of the plan were very much in keeping with the text of the syllabus. The Irish plan for the Leaving Certificate Applied should be clarified in relation to the programme material.
- The work schemes relating to the various years provided a clear guide to the work carried out on an ongoing basis; it would be worth having a clearer outline in the plan of the incremental progress to be made in the learning objectives from year to year.
- In the case of literacy, it would be worth agreeing and inserting in the plan an authoritative list of key words that are to be learned, practised and tested in specific classes.
- The Irish plan for Transition Year differed from that of other years, as it should. An examination of the Irish language in the students’ own community formed a central part of the plan.

- An analysis of student attainment in the certificate examinations in Irish showed very positive trends. A very high proportion of students regularly take higher level in the subject and the pattern of attainment throughout was very positive.
  - It is commendable that the Junior Certificate optional Irish oral examination is being made available to students for a long time in keeping with a recommendation made in the last subject inspection.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and 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**

**Part A: Observations on the content of the inspection report**

**Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection**

The board of management of Pobalscoil Ghaoth Dobhair welcomes the subject inspection report of Irish. With regard to the main recommendations, every effort will be made from September 2016 onwards:

- to ensure that ‘*An Foclóir Beag*’ will be consulted regularly from first year onwards
- that exemplars of the best of the students’ written and oral work will be collected for use as teaching resources as previously done with [www.ceacht.ie](http://www.ceacht.ie)
- to ensure that the subject plan will more clearly delineate the incremental progress to be made with the learning objectives from year to year.

*(The above text is a translation of the school response to the report submitted by the Board of Management).*