

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

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

**Holy Faith Secondary School**  
**Clontarf, Dublin 3**  
**Roll Number: 60750J**

**Date of inspection: 13 September 2011**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	12 & 13 September 2011
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching in the subject was positive and included teaching of a very high quality. Learning was enhanced by the purposeful approach evident in teaching.
- The students were themselves motivated to learn and a positive learning atmosphere prevailed in lessons.
- The students are set high expectations in Irish and a very high proportion study the subject at higher level. Certificate examinations data show positive trends of high achievement in the subject.
- There is a very high level of support for Irish in regard to subject provision.
- Cultural awareness is promoted outside the classroom by activities such as the Transition Year visit to the Gaeltacht.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teaching should include a focus on differentiation in order to provide the most able students with an appropriate challenge in the lesson. Teaching should routinely promote learner autonomy as the ultimate aim of teaching and learning.
  - The possibilities of providing the students with an opportunity to avail of the optional oral Irish examination in the Junior Certificate should be favourably examined.
  - The schemes of work should be reviewed with a view to clearly specifying incremental learning outcomes from year to year, particularly in relation to the oral work.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Holy Faith Secondary School Clontarf is a Catholic voluntary secondary school for girls. Irish is strongly represented on the school programmes, Junior Certificate, compulsory Transition Year programme, established Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. There are six teachers of Irish and current year enrolment is 634 students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching was predominantly positive and included teaching of a very high quality. The purposeful approach in teaching benefited learning. Teaching and learning could be enhanced by teachers observing each others practice and identifying areas for improvement.
- In the most successful lessons the work was well tailored to the needs of the students in the class. In a small number there was need for greater attention to this as these lessons were in turn overly challenging and insufficiently challenging.
- Irish is well regarded in the school. Students are set high expectations in the subject and a high proportion study higher level. Certificate examinations data show positive trends of high attainment in the subject.
- The target language was prominent in all lessons and almost all teachers had the capacity to encourage the students to participate in the lessons. This was evident in the good questioning strategies that were employed in most cases.
- The learning outcomes should be communicated clearly at the outset of the lesson, revisited as necessary, and reviewed at the end of the lesson. Lesson content should be distinguished from learning outcomes.
- Lesson management was good for the most part and excellent in the case of a senior cycle lesson. In this case all the language skills were well covered thanks to good time management of the various components of the lesson.
- Differentiation in teaching is an area for development in order to provide appropriate challenge to the most proficient learners in the class. The challenges set needed greater variation to adequately address this need.
- Due attention was paid to raising language awareness in lessons. Alongside this the aim of enriching students' vocabulary should be among the learning outcomes of all lessons. It would be helpful to write new vocabulary in a particular area of the whiteboard and that students routinely note this.
- A positive learning atmosphere prevailed in all lessons and the students were motivated to learn, well mannered and co-operative throughout. Opportunities to promote co-operative learning should be exploited in preference to the teacher being the sole dispenser of knowledge.
- Teachers are advised to regularly set aside a segment of lessons for discussion of current news stories in keeping with the students' range of interests. The practising of oral language undertaken with the students for example was confined to basic questions about themselves and their immediate environment even in the most senior class. No routine discussion of the major topical news stories with students was noted although several news stories of interest to the students were in the media at the time of the inspection. It would be good practice to encourage discussion of current affairs with students without

first providing prepared notes, in the interests of promoting learner autonomy which is the ultimate aim of teaching and learning.

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

- School management provides a very high level of support for subject provision in Irish. The generous time allocation and the widespread arrangements for concurrent timetabling are evidence of this.
- The school supports staff development and approval was granted to all teachers to attend the Second Level Support Service for Irish programmes over the past two years.
- The subject is well provided for in terms of resources, including information and communications technology (ICT) resources. Co-curricular and extracurricular support is also good; an example of which is the Gaeltacht visit on the TY programme.
- This high level of support complements the efforts of the Irish department to set high expectations for the subject.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Individual teachers undertake the review and drafting of particular work plans at the start of the school year. It would be better to undertake this work collaboratively and to have it completed before the start of the year.
- The work plans should be reviewed. The current plans are overly content-based as opposed to being laid out in terms of learning outcomes. Differentiation should be evident in the case of the challenges set for students from year to year. The limited challenges set for oral work in the current plans are a particular area for development.
- Assessment of students' oral proficiency is appropriately being gradually developed. The proportion of marks being awarded for this key language skill is uneven however at present from one year to another.
- The Irish department is urged to concentrate efforts in collaborative planning on providing students with the opportunity to avail of the optional oral Irish examination in the Junior Certificate examination.
- A common approach should be agreed shortly and more precise reporting provided to parents on students' oral proficiency in Irish.
- Teachers maintained good records of attendance, work programmes, and student attainment.

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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 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.

*Published March 2012*

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

The Board wishes to commend the members of the Irish department on the very positive report on the teaching and learning of Irish in the school. The Board extends its thanks to the inspector for the courtesy shown to all members of the school community.

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

Subject department meetings will review the teaching and learning of Irish in the school as planned and will include consideration of the report's main recommendations. The Board will continue to support and promote the teaching and learning of Irish throughout the school and will assist in the implementation of the report's recommendations.