

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Ennistymon Vocational School
Ennistymon
County Clare
Roll number: 70840Q

Date of inspection: 7 December 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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date(s) of inspection	7 December 2011
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• Examination of students' work• Feedback to Principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teaching methodologies employed in all classes were very good.
- The systems of summative assessment implemented in the school for all year groups are good and all the skills of language are included in these examinations.
- There is satisfactory provision in the timetable for Irish and the school has an extensive range of aids and resources and these are regularly renewed.
- The curricular plans were of very good quality and review forms part of the practice of the Irish department.
- Very good short-term planning and preparation had been made for all classes.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the curricular plans should be developed further in order that the four main skills of language and various elements of the courses would be taught in an integrated and thematic manner.
 - It would be well worthwhile devising an action plan based on the outcomes of the review being conducted by the department at present, as a guide for the strategic development of Irish.
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INTRODUCTION

Ennistymon Vocational School is a co-educational school and functions under the auspices of the County Clare Vocational Education Committee (VEC). There are 152 students attending the school and Transition Year forms an obligatory part of the school curriculum.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The teaching and learning methodologies being practised in all classes were very good.
- It was a defining characteristic of these lessons that the students were provided with opportunities for activity. There was variety in the lessons as the skills of language were integrated thematically in the great majority of them.
- In one exemplary lesson, the teacher facilitated learning by empowering the students to describe the poetic techniques used in a poem.
- Very good use was made of group work and peer learning in another class, in which the students discovered collaboratively the verbs and the speech idioms needed to describe a series of pictures.
- It is recommended, while the group work is in progress, that a specific role should be assigned to each member of the group, in order that each student would contribute to the learning outcomes.
- Information and Communication Technology (ICT) was used in all the classes. The material used enhanced the clarity of teaching and the students' learning. A work sheet and other teaching and learning aids designed by the teachers ensured that the full range of learning styles was catered for.
- It is recommended that a pre-communicative stage be introduced for all language skills, including reading.
- Irish was the language in use in all interactions between teachers and students in class. It is recommended that the specific vocabulary needed by students should be taught, that misunderstandings should be clarified and that expressed opinions should be recorded on charts on the classroom walls and that these should be changed frequently. Gradually, year after year, each year group will acquire a useful vocabulary store.
- A friendly, supportive atmosphere pervaded all the classes. The teachers were very well acquainted with the students under their care.
- Developmental work had been completed in the great majority of copy books taken up at random. Good practice was apparent in the mechanical corrections made in all copy books. It would be of benefit if further strategies of assessment for learning were implemented by the department.
- The translation method was frequently used in some copy books, as well as tests based on this approach. It would be well worthwhile reviewing this situation.
- It was clear from the random sample of journals collected in each class that home work is given regularly. Variety in the language skills practised in the home work tasks was evident in some journals, in keeping with an agreed approach in the plan for Irish. It would be well worthwhile making more extensive use of the practice
- The organisational skills of students were being developed in the learners' work, and the additional notes contained in some folders were of a high standard.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision made for Irish in the timetable is satisfactory, as regards the number and distribution of class periods and the contemporaneous arrangements made for particular year groups. The school management intends expanding this provision in the future.
- Students who wish to change from one level to another more appropriate one are very well managed and the school has a standardised form for such situations.
- The Irish department has forged comprehensive links with the special educational needs department.
- Twenty-six per cent of all students have been granted recognition by the school as being exempt from Irish in accordance with the provisions of Circular M10/94. Despite having exemptions, nine of these students study Irish. The school management is congratulated on fostering an attitude of proficiency as regards the learning of Irish in the school and on communication with the home.
- The staff members are to be commended on the extensive range of co-curricular and extra-curricular events organised. These initiatives are very well supported by the Vocational Education Committee.
- All those teaching Irish in the school are graduates in Irish and they are all afforded opportunities of teaching in both Cycles and at the various examination levels. Every teacher has a good record of attendance at external courses provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers.
- The school has good teaching aids and resources which support the teaching and learning of Irish, and this equipment is regularly renewed, including electronic resources. An archive of the speaking skills of students is being compiled by the department. This project is commendable from the point of view of learning possibilities for students.
- Summative examinations are regularly administered to students and all the skills of language are included in these assessments, from First Year on to the Leaving Certificate Year. It is praiseworthy that the students of this school will take the optional oral test in the Junior Certificate this year for the second time.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The teachers of Irish have carried out a self-assessment of the work of the department and the outcomes of this assessment form part of the plan. It would be well worthwhile devising an action plan based on this analysis.
- Very good progress has been made in respect of the curriculum plans for the various year groups. It is recommended that the planning should be done so as to ensure that the four main skills of language and various elements of the courses would be taught in an integrated and thematic manner.
- A beginning has been made in cross-curricular discussions with the French department, with a view to developing teaching and learning strategies which would advance both languages. The department is heartily congratulated on adopting this professional approach.

- The broad focus of the Transition Year programme is commendable and it would be well worthwhile selecting literature which has not been listed as part of the Leaving Certificate syllabus.
 - The short-term planning and the preparation made for all classes were very good and set out in a clear, structured and developmental order.
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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; a response was not received from the board.

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