

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

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Newport College
Newport, County Tipperary**

Roll number: 72450N

Date of inspection: 24 October 2013



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

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	24 October 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and the subject-teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and the subject-teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Exemplary teaching and learning methodologies were a characteristic of all the lessons observed during the evaluation.
- The department has developed various models for including the four main language skills in the summative and formative assessment carried out on all students' work in the subject.
- There are significant strengths in the provision and support available for the teaching and learning of Irish in the school.
- The planning documents indicate very good development of methodologies for teaching the four main language skills and various aspects of the courses in an integrated thematic way.
- The teachers of Irish have carried out a very good self-evaluation of the work of the department and the outcomes of this evaluation are included in the action plan for the subject for the current schoolyear.
- There was a high standard of short-term planning and preparation for all the lessons.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that further learning strategies be explicitly taught, to promote independent learning among the students, in accordance with the department's own objectives.
- It is recommended that tasks assigned as homework should regularly include all four language skills, as set out in the homework policy in the plan for Irish.
- It would be beneficial to further develop instruments for the assessment of learning and assessment-for-learning in the department, and that the appropriate assessment methods should be specified in the curriculum plans.

INTRODUCTION

Newport College is a co-educational school which is under the auspices of the Tipperary Education and Training Board. It is a DEIS school, with 109 students on its rolls. The Junior Certificate School Programme, the Applied Leaving Certificate, as well as the established programmes for the Junior Certificate and the Leaving Certificate are part of the school curriculum; the Transition Year programme is not available.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Exemplary teaching and learning practices were used in all the classes observed.
- All the teachers shared the learning targets with the students at the start of classes and, in one case; a review session was carried out at the end of the lesson. This is praiseworthy practice and it is recommended that it be more widely used, to enable the students to identify their own learning outcomes.
- Among the best methods observed in use was the effective thematic integration of the four main language skills as well as variety in the teaching and learning activities used, which created communicative opportunities for the students. In every lesson, students' learning needs were very well attended to while the students were involved in co-operative tasks. All lessons also contained a good mixture of differentiated questions.
- Significant links were made in every case between the subject-matter of the lessons, students' life-experience and the learning ahead. Very good recapitulation of students' prior knowledge was also conducted with the students using brain-storming techniques.
- Good use was made of information and communication technology resources and of the classroom board, which enhanced students' visual learning in the lessons.
- Irish was the medium of instruction used by the teachers in all classes. Good practices were used to focus students' attention on the grammatical rules of the language and the effect the application of the rules exerts on word-pronunciation. It is recommended that strategies be used to enable students to break new words into syllables.
- The teachers were using good language-grading skills, sometimes enhanced by gesticulation, to give an insight into the meaning of target vocabulary, instead of overdependence on the translation method.
- The students had good Irish and were willing to use it during lessons.
- All the teachers had good classroom management ability and the atmosphere in the classes was very supportive of learning, with the teachers having high learning expectations of the students in their care. It is recommended that the students be explicitly taught further learning strategies, to promote independent learning, as set out in the department's own objectives.
- There was an exemplary learning environment to support the learning of the language in the classroom where Irish is taught.
- A random sample of students' homework diaries was collected during every lesson. It was evident that homework was being regularly set for every class-group; however, the homework tasks lacked variety. It is recommended that there be variety in terms of the language skill assigned as homework on a regular basis, in line with the department's own homework policy as set out in the plan for Irish.

- First-year and second-year students have started on a grammar booklet entitled *Gaeilge Ghasta* and the department aims to add to the information in this booklet through to the Leaving Certificate year. This approach is commended.
- Incremental work was in evidence in all the copybooks examined. Mechanical corrections had been made in them and grades awarded as a guide to the standard of the work. It was reported that the students do self-correction of written work based on the feedback from their teachers, as is appropriate. It would be well worth sharing the assessment criteria for the four language skills, with the students; this would enhance the self-correction process and also provide a framework for peer-correction.
- A general recommendation is made that the department make more use of tools for assessment of learning and of assessment-for-learning.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Irish has a good standing in the school and there are significant strengths in the provision and support available for the teaching and learning of the subject.
- Aids and resources of a high quality have been developed in the school for the teaching and learning of Irish, and these supportive aids, including electronic resources, are continuously updated. It is commended that the students themselves have a central role in designing and developing these resources.
- All the teachers teaching Irish in the school have degrees in the subject and each teacher has experience of teaching in both junior and senior cycles and at the different examination levels.
- It is commendable that the Irish-teaching staff take part in continuous professional development at various levels and that the department uses methodologies recommended at such workshops as part of their normal practice.
- It is calculated that nineteen per cent of the total school attendance have been approved by the school for exemption from Irish in accordance with the provisions of Circular M10/94.
- The students of this school take part in a very good range of co-curricular and extra-curricular events throughout the schoolyear. In-school projects are organised, on a whole-school basis, and students also attend competitions and events outside the school.
- Good systems have been developed to conduct formative and summative assessments of Irish. The four main language skills are included in the regular tests and in the summative assessment for all year groups.
- Teachers have carried out very good analysis of the results in the certificate examinations in Irish in recent years. This analysis is one of the primary sources that informs planning for the language.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The department of Irish is a progressive department which works co-operatively and very diligently. There are significant strengths in the quality of planning for Irish.

- The teachers of Irish have engaged very well with self-evaluation of the work of the department in recent years. The results of this up-to-date evaluation form part of the action plan for the language for the current schoolyear. The department is congratulated on this professional approach.
- In the curriculum plans for the various year-groups, very good progress has been made in teaching the language in an integrated thematic way. It is recommended that the methods of assessment also be specified in these plans.
- Agreed strategies for literacy and numeracy, as part of the whole-school self-evaluation process, are specified in the plan for Irish.
- High quality short-term planning and preparation had been carried out for all classes observed during the inspection.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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