

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Irish  
REPORT**

**Finn Valley College  
(Coláiste Ghleann na Finne)  
Stranorlar, County Donegal  
Roll number: 71240U**

**Date of inspection: 06 April 2011**



**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>Date(s) of inspection</b>	06 April 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>• Examination of data in relation to Irish in the certificate examinations for the years 2008, 2009, 2010</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Teaching was undertaken diligently and there was a positive outcome for the learner where active learning was implemented.
- Progress in learning was curtailed where lessons were excessively based on the textbook as the sole resource and where conversation was limited.
- Good provision was made for weaker learners in particular, and the emphasis placed on key words helped learners to achieve progress in all lessons.
- In the past few years assessment of oral proficiency in the language has been included in the house examinations for almost all year groups. This is a positive step.
- It was evident in the classrooms that student proficiency in the language was quite limited, however good competence in the language and self confidence in speaking the language at the highest level was also evident. Student work in the copybooks was to be commended, for the most part.
- Developmental planning is being promoted and the school is focusing on increasing the numbers of students undertaking higher level.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- A review of timetabled provision for the subject in both junior and senior cycles is recommended.
- Additional time should be allocated in class to practising oral work and for general conversation.

- Within the planning work it would be worthwhile to focus on clearly identifying learning outcomes rather than having an overemphasis on content in the subject plans.
  - Samples of students' best work should be recorded and copied as exemplars for other students.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Finn Valley College (Coláiste Ghleann na Finne) is a co-educational post-primary school under the management of County Donegal Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Irish is a core subject on the school curriculum. All curricular programmes, with the exception of Transition Year, are offered in the school. The school participates in the action plan for educational inclusion Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS). Two hundred and seventy-seven students are enrolled for the school year 2010/11. The school is moving to a newly constructed building in autumn 2011.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Teaching was undertaken diligently in all lessons. In the best examples of teaching and learning observed clear learning objectives were communicated to students; a variety of learning activities was set out and a range of resources had been prepared to support these activities. In addition students were provided with greater opportunity for oral practice. On the other hand, the lesson was based to a large extent on the content of the textbook without giving due attention to the learning objectives.
- There was very careful attention to the needs of weaker learners. Teachers were familiar with Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) learning strategies and effective use was made of the identification, acquisition and practice of key words as routine practice.
- Learning was most successful in lessons where active learning was in operation rather than in lessons which were excessively teacher directed throughout.
- Differentiation was employed effectively in some lessons. Differentiation should be implemented more clearly in oral questioning of students and this approach should be practised for a longer period of time during lessons. Lengthy periods of time spent on questioning of individual students should be avoided.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) resources would greatly enhance motivation for learning and the use of these resources was quite limited.
- A good effort was made to include the interests of students by the use of a photograph and an account of a well-known sports personality. However, the quality of the text was uninteresting, complicated and inaccurate. Such a text should be rewritten and adapted for learners.
- Lesson management was effective. Students were encouraged and their efforts were recognised and respected. All students were respectful of teachers and excellent co-operation was evident in all lesson activities.
- The quality of work in the copybooks was good and in some instances, very good with teacher recognition of the work evident. In some cases the amount of translation to English was of concern.

- It is recommended that, with the permission of students, an interview or a presentation by students who are more proficient in the language be recorded and a store of copies of their composition work should be collected as exemplars and as encouragement for other students.
- Good efforts are being made to encourage students to undertake higher level and this objective should be included in the review of the timetabled provision for the subject in junior cycle.

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

- The limited provision of four periods per week in junior cycle is considered insufficient to achieve improvements. A review of this allocation is recommended. Provision in senior cycle is good however the two additional periods for Leaving Certificate higher level at lunch time should be reviewed also.
- ICT resources for teaching are limited, however an improvement in these resources can be expected in the new school building. Teachers are very competent in ICT skills.
- It is a positive step that for the past few years, assessment of oral proficiency in the language has been included in house examinations for almost all year groups. Information on Gaeltacht scholarship schemes is promoted in the school. Focus is being placed on assessment for learning at a whole-school level.
- A professional approach to teaching operates in the Irish department. The teachers have attended courses organised by the second level support service for Irish. The VEC offers practical support through work groups for Irish in which teachers from the school participate.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Good work is ongoing in subject planning and the Irish department is currently exploring possibilities in order to improve student attainment in Irish in the certificate examinations.
- In the case of the Junior Certificate School Programme worthwhile learning objectives have been set out in the work plan for Irish and JCSP statements have been formulated for Irish. Subject plans for all year groups would benefit from an additional emphasis on learning outcomes rather than having too great a focus on content.
- It is good that teachers are preparing for the school's future implementation of the optional oral examination in Junior Certificate Irish by the phased introduction of the assessment of oral proficiency as a component in the house examinations.
- It is recommended that the learning atmosphere in Irish classrooms in the new building be enhanced by means of the quality of display on the walls, and the use of ICT resources to facilitate and provide variety and innovation.
- Record keeping in the planning work and in the documenting of achievement in the subject was good at both the level of the Irish department and at individual teacher level.

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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 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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