

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

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Gallen Community School
Ferbane, County Offaly
Roll number: 91515W**

Date of inspection: 26 September 2012



**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 of inspection	26 September 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Meeting with the subject co-ordinator and the principal• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with the students• Review of samples of students' work and of their school diaries• Feedback to individual teachers• Feedback to the department of Irish• Feedback to the principal

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of the classes was very good and, in the case of the minority, it was fairly good.
- In most classes, the teachers had high expectations for student learning and the work of developing the various language skills was undertaken on a thematic basis.
- Good use is made of information and communication technology in the work of the department of Irish in general and in the classrooms.
- The staff avail of opportunities for professional development and approaches to teaching are discussed at subject department meetings.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the experience gained in differentiating learning be extended and further developed through the various tasks to be undertaken by students, homework included.
- It is recommended that the use of outcomes of house examinations in monitoring and reviewing of planning for learning during the school year be more clearly recorded in individual class-group plans.
- It is recommended that strategies and actions be devised and agreed to increase the number of students who attempt the higher level in the Leaving Certificate.

INTRODUCTION

Gallen Community School is a co-educational post-primary school. It operates under the trusteeship of the Sisters of Saint Joseph of Cluny, County Offaly Vocational Education Committee and the Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. There are 394 students enrolled in the school and a Transition Year programme is provided on an optional basis.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the majority of classes, and fairly good in the case of the minority.
- Good practice was observed in the manner in which expected learning outcomes were shared with the students and reviewed in most classes.
- The development of students' skills in oral Irish was emphasised in all classes.
- Very good examples of pair work and group work were observed.
- The teachers had high, but appropriate, expectations for student learning in most cases.
- In a minority of cases, students should be given more responsibility for their own learning and, with this objective in view, appropriate strategies should be chosen for use in class.
- In most classes, the development of language skills was thematically integrated.
- A very good example was observed of oral preparation for a written task.
- An appropriate range of questions was used in all classes.
- Homework was differentiated in one case; it is recommended that this practice be extended.
- Account is taken of the main language skills in the assessment tests.
- Student achievements in the certificate and house examinations are analysed. It is recommended that the use of outcomes in house examinations in monitoring and reviewing of planning for learning during the school year be more clearly recorded in class-group plans.
- An analysis of the results of certificate examinations indicates that participation and achievement levels in the Junior Certificate examination are improving, but that there still is scope for increasing the number of students taking the higher level and similarly the number achieving the highest grades in the Leaving Certificate could be increased.
- Technology is used to support the learning and, in certain cases, to develop students' skills in self-assessment of their ability in oral Irish.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The time allocated for Irish in senior cycle where students have five class periods per week in each of fifth and sixth year and four class periods in TY is very good. In junior cycle, students are allocated four class periods in each year. It is recommended that, in co-operation with the teachers, management considers how best to utilise the overall

amount of time available for Irish in the two cycles to maximise learning in the junior cycle providing a solid foundation for learning in senior cycle.

- There is a very good supply of aids and resources available and technology is effectively used in the work of the department and to develop, store and share resources.
- The staff is very well supported in the area of continuous professional development.
- A reasonably large number of students have an exemption from the study of Irish and it is recommended that the management monitor trends in this area.
- Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are provided for students allowing them opportunities to use Irish and experience the culture.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The department of Irish is structured on a formal basis.
- The teachers collaborate in their planning and *Curaclam na Bunscoile: Gaeilge* and the syllabuses are used in the process.
- The teachers hold regular meetings and the minutes indicate that the teaching approaches practised are discussed and considered at these meetings.
- A very good quality subject plan is available with plans for individual year groups setting out learning outcomes on a week-by-week basis and linking language functions and subject content.
- It is recommended that more explicit use be made of the outcomes of house examinations and state examinations in forming baseline data and in monitoring and reviewing planning documents.
- Very good planning and preparation had been done for individual lessons, in almost every case. A variety of aids and resources had been chosen for use in each class.
- Regular records of the learning achievements of the students are kept.

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, 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

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

The Board of Management commend the members of the Irish Department for the very professional manner in which they carry out their duties as evidenced in this report. The very good teaching, the collaborative approach taken to planning as evidenced in the high quality plan and their commitment to continuous professional development are all appreciated by students, parents and management. The teachers also set high, expectations for student learning.

The Board also commends the commitment to the promotion of Irish in the school through extra-curricular activities as evidenced by a national *Gleo* Award presented to the school by Foras na Gaeilge.

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

We look forward to implementing the recommendations proposed in conjunction with the Irish Department.