

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

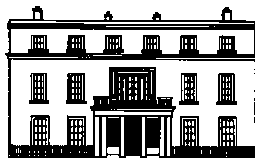
**Subject Inspection of Irish  
REPORT**

**Nenagh Vocational School**

**Nenagh, Co. Tipperary**

**Roll number: 72440K**

**Date of inspection: 3 December 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**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	3 December 2012
<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 four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to Principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The teaching and learning methods in all classes were of good quality.
- This year, the standard of provision for the teaching and learning of Irish has been greatly improved.
- The four main skills language skills are included in the summative and formative assessments of students.
- The level of participation by the department in the planning process for teaching and learning the language was good.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It would be well worth while for the department to discuss teaching and learning methodologies, so that good practice might be shared.
  - It is recommended that approaches in the use of the target language, and the practices relating to the assessment of the students' work, should be developed.
  - It is recommended that daily inputs for the teaching and learning of the language should become common practice in the school and that continuity in the Irish teaching staff should be maintained in the years ahead.
  - It is recommended that more extensive use should be made of an integrated, thematic approach in all curricular plans, and that a developmental action plan should be drawn up collaboratively by the members of the department.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Nenagh Vocational School is a co-educational school which operates under the auspices of the North Tipperary Vocational Education Committee. The total number of students enrolled in the school is 276 and the Transition Year Programme forms part of the school curriculum on an optional basis.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Good methods of teaching and learning were being employed in the majority of classes.
- It is praiseworthy that clear learning objectives were set for all lessons but not all of these were achieved in a small number of classes. It is important to ensure that all lessons have a purposeful pace so that the majority of teaching and learning objectives are achieved.
- A consistent characteristic of the good practice observed in lessons was that a balance was achieved between the teacher's input and the students' activities. These activities created opportunities for the learners to engage with the subject matter of lessons and effective scaffolding was carried out during the task-based activities, for both individual tasks and group tasks. It was apparent from these lessons also that the range of learning styles had been taken into account in the short-term planning.
- A very good example of paired work was observed in one lesson where the time for the task was allocated beforehand, each member of the group had been assigned a specific role and a feedback session with students was undertaken. These guidelines should be implemented on a more extensive basis.
- Good use was made of the integrated, thematic approach in all classes.
- The majority of teachers had carried out comprehensive preparation in order to enhance the development of the various language skills, including a brain-storming session during one lesson. It would be worth while carrying out similar pre-skill work on vocabulary and on pronunciation before setting reading tasks for students.
- In one class a good mix of differentiated directed questions and open questions was employed. In general, effective use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) and of the classroom white board.
- Irish was the language used by teachers for all classroom interactions and, in a good number of classes; the students were prepared to make use of the Irish they had learned. In general, however, they had not achieved competence in the use of the vocabulary required to express themselves, to indicate misunderstandings and to offer opinions. It is recommended that this gap in the students' linguistic competence be addressed. It is necessary to be attentive to the accuracy of the language used small number of worksheets.
- Language-grading skills were not being extensively used by the department As a result, in one class, the learners did not always understand the lesson content. It is recommended that language-simplification skills should be developed on a continuing basis by members of the department.
- The attention of students was seldom drawn to key grammatical points in the communicative context of the text during lessons. It is recommended that opportunities should be availed to judiciously develop the students' grammatical accuracy, in an incremental manner, during each lesson.

- Commendable efforts had been made to provide rich learning environments in the classrooms, considerable scope to develop this area further during were evident in the classrooms where Irish is taught.
- All teachers demonstrated effective class management ability and an atmosphere supportive of learning prevailed in all classes.
- Good developmental work was observed in the majority of copybooks randomly collected. All copybooks contained spelling corrections and grades to indicate the quality of the work done. It is strongly recommended that additional strategies, both for the assessment of learning and assessment for learning, should be utilised by the department.

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

- This year, almost all class groups are given daily inputs in Irish and Transition Year students have three class periods per week. The increase in the allocation of class periods for the teaching and learning of Irish in the current year is commended.
- Nineteen per cent of the total enrolment has been granted exemption from Irish by the school, in accordance with the provisions of Circular M10/94.
- Four teachers teach Irish in the school this year and three of these are appropriately qualified in Irish. However, there is only one teacher on staff this year who taught the language in the school last year. This lack of continuity in the Irish department is a cause for concern. It is recommended that every effort should be made to ensure that all students will have continuity in learning, particularly students in certificate examination classes.
- It is commendable that representatives of the Irish department attended training courses provided by the Professional Development Service for Teachers (PDST) in the past number of years. A discussion on the subject matter of these courses, as part of the development planning for the teaching and learning of the language, would be beneficial for the department.
- Resources to enhance the learning and teaching of Irish are being developed. It is recommended that resources and up-to-date books should be collected, and that the list of Irish language resources available for post-primary students on the PDST website should be used as a reference point.
- The four main skills of language are included in the summative and formative assessments of students from First Year on to the Leaving Certificate year.
- Students participate successfully in co-curricular events which contribute positively to the language and cultural awareness of the learners.
- It is necessary to be cognisant of the effect which rates of student non-attendance have on learning in all year groups, particularly among the senior groups.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The planning process for the teaching and learning of Irish has been started anew with a new team this year. In this context, very good progress has been made with the curricular plans for the various year groups.

- It would be beneficial to further develop these plans and to plan for the teaching of the four main skills of language, and the various elements of the courses, in an integrated, thematic manner, including the literature.
- The Transition Year plan seeks to provide an innovative teaching and learning experience during that year. It is recommended that the *Portfolio of European Languages* should be also drawn on for the purpose of this initiative.
- It is recommended that an on-going review of the plan for Irish should be carried out, and that agreement should be reached on an action plan to guide the strategic development of the department.
- The planning for all lessons was either good or very good.
- All teachers had carried out very good preparation for their lessons.

---

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 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.