

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Irish  
REPORT**

**Mount Anville Secondary School  
Dublin 14  
Roll Number: 60140F**

**Date of inspection: 20th March 2015**



**A N R O I N N | 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 of inspection</b>	20th March 2015
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with the principal and teachers</li><li>• Contact with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observing teaching and learning during 6 class periods</li><li>• Review of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and interaction was very good in the lessons observed and the students made a very good effort to use Irish even though there were a small number of lessons where there was a lack of opportunities to speak in the target language.
- All of the lessons observed were prepared well and it was clear that students were working diligently.
- A supportive learning environment was created in most of the classrooms and appropriate emphasis was placed on literacy to help the learning of students.
- Good attention was paid to literacy in Irish and to grammar in certain lessons and there was one example observed of effective development of numeracy in Irish.
- Certain lessons had an encouraging, energetic approach, which greatly added to the interest of the students in the subject of the lesson and to the progression of their learning.
- Limited use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) during a small number of classes.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- More attention needs to be focussed on the development of students' communication skills and providing them with real communication opportunities regularly during the lessons.
- The amount of teaching resources used in the lessons needs to be expanded, the use of ICT included, to add to the interest of the students in the subject of the lesson and to put the learning in an encouraging, enjoyable and contemporary context.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Mount Anville Secondary School is a private secondary school for girls with a current enrolment of 627 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, a compulsory Transition Year programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The standard of teaching and learning was in the range between satisfactory and very good with some examples of excellent practice in certain lessons.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was very good on the whole among teachers and their dedication to the target language is commended. Little emphasis was placed on the use of translation from Irish to English as an approach and this is commendable. Certain teachers had high expectations regarding the use of Irish among the students and in the cases where the teachers demanded the use of the target language, the students did their best to speak Irish.
- Work in pairs was used to encourage and inspire cooperative working in certain cases and it is recommended that this approach be expanded to all Irish lessons. This strategy supported students' interest in the lesson and helped with their progression in learning. In certain lessons, there was not enough emphasis on real communication opportunities in the target language to give students opportunities to put what they learn to practical use.
- Communication strategies, such as working in pairs, group work, language games and role play, should be used regularly to facilitate and encourage communication in the target language among students. In situations where work in pairs is ongoing and students are asking each other questions, it is recommended that sample questions and, if needed, sample answers be provided on the white board through a projector to help with the learning process. They can be removed when the students get used to this communication.
- Limited use was made of ICT in a small number of lessons. The school has excellent ICT resources and a lot of investment has been made in developing these resources. It is recommended that the teachers discuss the use of ICT to support students' learning and that ICT use be integrated into the plan for the teaching and learning of the language in general. It is also recommended that use be made of a wider range of teaching resources.
- It was clear that the students were diligent and there was a friendly, enjoyable atmosphere in the lessons observed. On the whole, teachers prepared well for the lessons.
- Proper emphasis was placed on grammatical accuracy in certain lessons and the students' attention was focussed on common mistakes in an enjoyable, supportive way. Students' attention was also drawn to other aspects of literacy in lessons, an approach which is recommended and which should be expanded to all lessons. In one case observed, attention was paid to numeracy in Irish, an approach which is highly commended and which supports the whole school strategy regarding numeracy.
- A very supportive learning environment was created in the classrooms, and materials of a high standard were displayed to support the development of literacy in Irish and to support the students' learning in general. The layout of some classrooms is commended, a layout which helped encourage cooperative learning among students.

- Repetition was used regularly to teach new sounds, words and phrases to students and it is recommended that this approach be expanded to all lessons. It is also recommended that full sentences be demanded in reply to questions instead of accepting one word answers. This helps students to compile an oral understanding and experience of language syntax. Students in some lessons were reminded to use the verb which was used in the question in their answer and this practice should also be expanded.

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

- The provision of Irish is satisfactory with four classes per week being provided to year groups in the junior cycle, three periods per week for Transition Year and five periods per week for fifth and sixth years. It is recommended, if possible, to give an extra period per week to at least one year group in the junior cycle.
- Good effort is made in the school to raise the profile of Irish and to expand the students' experience of Irish as a living language outside of the lessons themselves. A range of events is organised during Seachtain na Gaeilge including an Irish lunch, a radio programme and poetry and debating competitions. The work of the teaching staff in organising these events is commended as well as the dedication of management to the promotion of the language in the school in general.
- The senior management of the school is dedicated to continuous professional development among teaching staff and the Irish teachers were given the opportunity to attend all the in-service courses provided by the Second Level Support Service for Irish in recent years.
- The students participate in the optional oral exam as part of the Junior Certificate and the students' communications skills are assessed in all year groups from first year onwards, a practice which is highly recommended.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Every teacher in the Irish department takes responsibility as a coordinator for the teaching and learning of Irish in their turn. This is a good practice. The Irish teachers have regular meetings and minutes are taken at the meetings. Taking minutes in Irish at the meetings and giving a recap or an English version to management, if necessary, would be good practice. The senior management and the coordinator meet once a month, a practice which is highly commended.
- A plan for the teaching and learning of Irish was presented on the day of the inspection. The amount of time and work spent on the cooperative planning was clear and the teachers' work on this was highly commended. It is recommended, as the plan is developed in the future, that the work schemes are laid out in an integrated way with details in relation methodologies, the use of resources and other materials, including ICT and modes of assessment, being provided.
- A high number of students take Irish at higher level in the state examinations and management is dedicated to maintaining that high number and raising it. An extra class is taking higher level in fifth year this year; significant progress which is highly commended.

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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal/deputy principal/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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