

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Meánscoil Iognáid Rís
Naas, County Kildare**

Roll number: 61710C

Date of inspection: 7 March 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

Dates of inspection	5 and 7 March 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Meeting with senior management and teachers of Irish• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with students• Review samples of students' work and school diaries• Feedback to individual teachers• Feedback to senior management and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- In the majority of lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good or very good and fair in others.
- School management provides very good support for Irish and the school has set an objective to increase the numbers of students taking higher level in the subject.
- Student behaviour was very good.
- The subject plan for Irish is of good quality and development targets have been agreed with school management.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Sharing of experience among members of the department is recommended as is the further development of effective strategies to support differentiated learning.
 - It is recommended that arrangements be put in place to develop an assessment policy which will include the homework policy as an integral part.
 - A review of the Transition Year plan is recommended. Practices should be developed to support monitoring and review of the department plan in general.
 - Literacy and numeracy skills should be integrated into the plans for the various year groups.
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INTRODUCTION

Located in Naas, County Kildare, Meánscoil Iognáid Rís is a voluntary secondary school for boys. A total of 872 students are enrolled. The school operates under the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. The Transition Year (TY) programme is offered on an optional basis.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In the majority of lessons observed the quality of teaching and learning was good or very good and fair in others.
- Students were set different tasks in most lessons visited and some very good examples of thematic integration in the development of the main language skills were observed.
- Well organised examples of pair and group work, which provided students with opportunities to cooperate in their learning, were evident. Cooperative learning and questioning should be used to further enhance the differentiation of learning.
- In a good number of cases students composed and posed questions on class content.
- Good practice in relation to the correction of students' work was evident in a number of cases. The feedback element of correction should be extended and developed.
- In some instances it was evident from oral answers provided by students that they are accustomed to translation to English. This practice should be avoided.
- On the whole, it was the theme of the lesson which was presented to students at the beginning of the lesson. It is recommended that the expected learning outcomes are shared with students and referred to again at appropriate stages during the lesson in order to assess progress.
- It was evident that work on grammar is carried out on a regular basis. This aspect of language learning will enable students to communicate effectively.
- Analysis of student achievement in examinations shows that worthwhile efforts are made to increase the number of students undertaking higher level in the certificate examinations. This target has been agreed with school management.
- In keeping with the aims of the syllabuses, all the language skills are now included in the assessment of student learning in first and second years.
- In some cases teacher input was excessive.
- It is recommended that, in a minority of cases, more care is taken to ensure the accuracy of material presented to students both orally and in written form.
- While it is the norm in the majority of cases, it is important that every member of the department follows the school's homework policy and assigns and corrects homework tasks.
- In order to share good practice among members of the department and to enrich experience it is recommended that use is made of collaborative professional review.
- Class management and student behaviour were very good.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- School management is very supportive of both the Irish language and Irish as a curricular subject.
- Timetabled provision for Irish at senior cycle is very good. A review is recommended of provision in junior cycle which is low at four periods per week for every year group.
- Irish is timetabled for a small number of class groups for more than one class period per day and the majority of Irish classes are held in the afternoon. Management accepts that provision of a more regular input of Irish is better for students and that this unusual distribution of class periods should be avoided.
- The school has a policy of assigning students to mixed-ability classes. It was not clear how the school ensures mixed ability within classes and it is therefore it is recommended that the criteria be clarified.
- A very good quality programme of continuing professional development is available to teachers.
- The school does not have a written assessment policy. As was recommended in the Whole-School Evaluation — Management, Leadership and Learning report, 2012, the development of an assessment policy is recommended again. In addition, this policy should incorporate the homework policy.
- Analysis of student achievement in certificate examinations has begun. In the interest of monitoring the progress of learning, it is recommended that an analysis is carried out on achievement in house examinations as well. Conclusions should be noted in the planning documentation.
- Ten percent of the total enrolment has an exemption from studying Irish.
- In almost all cases, teacher competence in oral Irish was satisfactory. In the interest of ensuring this high quality is available in all cases, it is recommended that CPD is availed of to ensure that all students are exposed to high quality Irish.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The Irish department operates effectively. Subject development targets have been agreed and presented to the board of management. An action plan should now be developed for these objectives.
- To support members of the department in developing their leadership skills in teaching and learning, it is recommended that the term of subject coordinator be a period of three years.
- The subject plan is of good quality. However, there is scope for further development of the teaching and learning section. To this end, it is recommended that teachers consult *Curaclam na Bunscoile: Gaeilge* and develop a specific module for students for the first term in first year; ensure that the incremental development of learning is evident in the plans year on year by setting out learning outcomes; include teaching and learning methods and strategies, together with assessment modes; and to support the whole-school plan, integrate the development of literacy and numeracy with subject content.

- There is scope for development in the TY plan. A full review of the plan is recommended and, in consultation with the students, content should be further linked with their special interests and their local environment.
- Monitoring and review practices should be developed for the subject plan and review notes included in the planning documentation.
- The good practice of setting common examinations obtains in certain cases and this practice should be extended. To further enhance good practice marking schemes should be agreed and scripts swapped.
- Teachers maintain good and regular records of student achievement.
- In the majority of cases the quality of planning and preparation for individual lessons was very good.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, the deputy principal and 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 welcomes the report and has commended the teachers of Irish on the very many positive observations within the report. It welcomes especially the commendations in relation to:

1. Very good examples of thematic integration in the development of the main language skills.
2. Analysis of student achievement in examinations shows that worthwhile efforts are made to increase the number of students undertaking higher level.
3. Classroom management and student behaviour were very good.
4. Good practice in relation to the correction of students' work.
5. School management is very supportive of both the Irish language and Irish as a curricular subject.
6. The quality of planning and preparation for individual lessons was very good.
7. The subject plan is of good quality.

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

The Board of Management has requested that the teachers of Irish consider the recommendations as part of School Self Evaluation. The development of an assessment policy integrating the homework policy is presently being undertaken. The principal will encourage a more collaborative approach within the Irish department to support differentiated learning. A review of the Transition Year Irish plan will be agreed. CPD will be encouraged and supported for all staff.