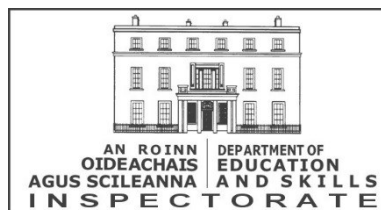


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**St. Joseph's College
Ballinasloe, County Galway
Roll Number: 62880J**

Date of Inspection: 11 March 2016



**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	10 and 11 March 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good teaching and learning methodologies were a distinctive characteristic of the majority of the lessons and exemplary teaching and learning practices were being used in a significant minority of these; there was scope for improvement in the methods used in a small number of others.
- Good provision is made for the teaching and learning of Irish in the school.
- The Irish department has good systems in use for the assessment of learning and recognition is given to all language skills for each year group.
- Good progress has been made by the department in the planning process for the subject.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended to make wider use of the communicative approach, the integrated thematic approach and of differentiated teaching and learning strategies in all of the lessons.
- It would be very worthwhile for the department to discuss the question of the use of translation and the development of the assessment for learning (AfL) with the aim of implementing agreed policies.
- It would be beneficial to teaching and learning to develop curricular plans in order to teach all of the syllabuses in an integrated thematic manner.
- It is recommended that an action plan be developed for the language and that achievable steps are devised to make progress in the recognised areas.

INTRODUCTION

St. Joseph's College is a voluntary secondary school for boys. There are 513 pupils enrolled in the current schoolyear 2015/16. The school's curriculum programmes comprise the Junior Certificate, Transition Year on an optional basis and the Established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the majority of lessons and in the case of less than half of the classes exemplary teaching and learning methodologies were being used. There was scope to develop the methods used in a small number of other lessons observed.
- Best practice was to be found in those lessons where clearly differentiated learning targets for classwork were set out, where various opportunities were created for the students to engage with the lesson material in a worthwhile manner and where the same aspects of the language were practiced again and again in different ways.
- The integration of all the language skills was very good in two lessons and the learning was enhanced due to the great variety in classroom activities.
- The needs of learners were well served before and during task-based work in the majority of classes. It is recommended that a time limit be set for the tasks beforehand and to use extension exercises in the lessons for those students who complete the core task before the allocated time has expired.
- Effective questioning strategies were used in the majority of the lessons and it would be very worthwhile to employ a similar approach on a wider basis.
- Where all the learning possibilities were not achieved in the lesson, the main reason for this was that too many different aspects had been planned for the lesson period and there was the lack of thematic link between them. As a result of this the key vocabulary and key language functions of the lesson had not been sufficiently consolidated by the end of the class.
- Good procedures were being employed regarding the correction of homework at the beginning of all classes.
- Irish was being used by the majority of the teachers for all classroom interactions. Limited use was made of the translation method in almost every lesson in a way which benefited learning; it was also evident in those lessons in which the target language was dominant and that the students were accustomed to this best practice. It would be worthwhile for the department to discuss the question on the use of translation for the benefit of implementing agreed policy.
- The students' attention was drawn to the significant points of grammar in the communicative context of the piece in most of the lessons. The language explanatory skills practiced by the majority of the teachers were of very good quality and vocabulary which arose during two lessons was grouped and very proficiently recorded on the board. It is recommended to make wider use of these approaches.
- In the case of less than half the lessons observed, care should be taken regarding the accuracy of verbal examples given to the students.

- All teachers showed very good ability in classroom management and a positive learning atmosphere prevailed in almost every class.
- With regard to the learning environment in the classrooms, the quality of that was very good and in the case of one room an exemplary environment had been created which was useful and current.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Very good provision is made for the teaching and learning of Irish at a whole-school level.
- The majority of the teachers teaching Irish in the school are graduates of Irish. It is recommended that the Irish staff participates in continuing professional development at different levels.
- Fifteen percent of the total number of students have an exemption from Irish in accordance with the provisions of Circular M10/94.
- The resources gathered and shared for teaching and learning Irish, which included information and communications technology (ICT), were of a very high standard. It is recommended as a priority for the department to continuously renew such supporting materials within the constraints of the school budget.
- The students of this school participate in a good range of co-curricular and extra-curricular events.
- The Irish department began analysing the Leaving Certificate examination results for Irish last year. It is recommended to include the Junior Certificate examination results in this analysis as well. It would be worthwhile to include this analysis as one of the primary sources to guide the planning process for the language.
- A homework policy has been developed by the school and it is commendable that emphasis was placed on all of the language skills in the policy and that there was evidence of this approach found in the majority of journals observed. The four language skills are also included in the monthly examinations undertaken by the students during the school year.
- Regular corrections were carried out in most of the copybooks reviewed and a system was employed in some copybooks to give feedback to the students on aspects of grammar and the syntax of the language. There was also evidence in these copybooks that developmental feedback of a very good quality was provided to the students.
- It would be very worthwhile for the department to discuss their expectations with regard to providing developmental feedback in writing to the different year groups so as to agree an approach accordingly.
- It is recommended to agree the success criteria with the students so that they can assess their own language skills and peer-assess other students' language skills.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The standard of planning for Irish was of good quality.

- Best practice was in those plans in which the syllabuses were being taught in an integrated thematic manner, which emphasised the learning objectives, the learning activities and which provided comprehensive details on assessment methods.
- It is recommended that these plans be used as exemplars so that the plans for each year group are of the same standard. When undertaking this developmental work it is recommended to also integrate the grammar, set of pictures and prescribed literature according to each theme as opposed to teaching them separately from the rest of the course.
- It is recommended that the department agree an action plan for the development of the language. Definite targets along with timeframes should be set out in order to achieve the agreed objectives.
- The short-term planning and preparation undertaken for most of the lessons was of very good or high quality. However, in the case of a few there was a need for substantial development.

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 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

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The school accepts the content and findings of the report.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The School accepts the content and findings of the report and it is our intention to implement the recommendations of the report.