

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

**Subject Inspection of Irish  
REPORT**

**Coláiste Chathail Naofa  
Dungarvan, County Waterford  
Roll number: 72220T**

**Date of inspection: 25 April 2012**



**AN ROINN | 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>	<b>25 April 2012</b>
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with the principal and the subject teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 class-periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to the principal and the subject teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, communication and teaching was very good or excellent in the vast majority of the classes observed.
- The use made of information and communication technology (ICT) in some of the classes observed is commended, but it will be necessary to raise the standard of material being used as the use of ICT is further developed in the school.
- The active approaches observed in use in the Irish classes ensured that there was a good pace to the lessons and that the students were engrossed in their learning; these approaches are highly commended.
- The work completed to date on planning for the teaching and learning of Irish, since the last Subject Inspection (2006), is praiseworthy.
- Appropriate attention was paid to the teaching of Irish verbs and Irish grammar in general, although this aspect of the work was not sufficiently addressed in all cases.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There should be more emphasis on the use of pairwork and other communication strategies, to encourage the students to speak the language.
  - Wider use should be made of repetition and other strategies, to ensure that the students can pronounce new words and phrases correctly.
  - It is recommended that teachers focus on more effective ways of helping students who encounter difficulties in learning Irish, by providing notes and worksheets which are more legible and more appropriate for them.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Chathail Noafa is a reasonably small school, with a current enrolment of 151 students at second level. The school provides a wide range of courses, including the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Applied Leaving Certificate (LCA) and Post-Leaving Certificate courses.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was very good or excellent in the majority of the classes observed. In most of the classes, satisfactory efforts were made to avoid translation from Irish to English: this approach is commended. In one case observed, however, more of the teaching should have been done through the medium of the target language. It is recommended that there be an agreed policy among the staff concerning the use of the target language.
- The aim of the lesson was written on the whiteboard at the start of a couple of lessons observed. This approach is commended, but could be developed by listing the learning targets at the outset and referring back to them at the end of the lesson, to check if they have been attained.
- Pair work and other strategies were used in all the classes observed, to ensure interactive learning. One lesson started with open questions about the students' own lives. In a few other cases, a game was used in class. These are good methodologies, which ensured that there was an appropriate pace to all the lessons and that the students were engrossed in their own learning.
- It must be ensured, however, that these activities result in authentic opportunities for communication in the target language. It is important that a regular review is conducted of the opportunities provided for students to use the target language and that such opportunities be increased as necessary.
- All lessons observed had been carefully prepared. The use of ICT in certain lessons is commended. It greatly enhanced student interest and the effectiveness of the teaching. It is recommended that teachers use illustrations and material of a high standard which would appeal to students, and that they avoid simple childish materials.
- During a few lessons observed, very good efforts were made to ask for full sentences, rather than single-word answers, from the students. In one case, a good deal of time was spent asking students to frame longer and more interesting sentences.
- In other cases, there was an appropriate emphasis on the learning and correct use of verbs. Aspects of learning Irish grammar were interwoven through the vast majority of lessons, but, in a couple of cases, further attention could have been paid to this.
- In the course of the lessons, students' efforts were continually acknowledged and praised. Although the layout of the classrooms was appropriate overall, the teaching would have been more effective in one particular case, if the seating were arranged on a more organised basis.
- Attention was paid to literacy in the classes observed. New words and phrases were recorded on the whiteboard and, in some classes, students kept a special notebook for keywords. In a few cases, however, worksheets were distributed which were not entirely suitable, due to inappropriate print size in one case, and comprehensibility of pictures in

another. It is recommended that teachers ensure that material used in classes is up-to-date, legible and attractive to students.

- There was a good deal of written work in the copybooks examined. It was evident that homework is assigned and corrected regularly.

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

- There is good provision for Irish on the school timetable, with five class-periods per week available for all classes in the school.
- An effort is made to timetable Irish classes in a particular classroom, so that a stimulating Irish environment can be created in that room; this approach is commended because the teachers do not have their own individual classrooms.
- Good efforts are made in the school to celebrate *Seachtain na Gaeilge* by organising a range of events and competitions. Also commended are the other opportunities provided for the students to experience Irish as a living language, for example, surfing lessons through the medium of Irish and visits to the theatre when an appropriate show is being staged.
- Fifth and sixth-year students take oral exams in preparation for the Leaving Certificate oral. The communicative skills of first-year students are informally assessed. It is recommended that this good practice be extended, to ensure that all students in the school take formal oral exams. The results of these assessments should be included in the reports sent to parents.
- The teachers have access to a range of teaching resources as well as good ICT facilities. An audit of resources should be carried out and the resulting list of resources should form part of the plan for teaching and learning the language.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A co-ordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of Irish in the school is nominated from among the subject teachers and this responsibility is taken by on all the teachers in turn.
- Minutes of the meetings of the teachers of Irish are available, which indicate that the allocation of Irish classes and student attainment are discussed. It is recommended that more complete minutes be kept, giving an account of professional discussion of teaching methodologies, communication strategies and planning for the use of ICT during lessons. A record should also be kept of decisions made and plans for the future.
- The work completed on the plan for the teaching and learning of Irish, since the last Subject Inspection of Irish (2006), is commended. It is evident that time and effort were invested in this. Teachers should now build on that work and lay out their schemes of work on a more integrated basis, giving details of teaching methodologies, thematic approaches, teaching resources, learning targets and assessment methods.

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.

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