

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

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Meánscoil San Nioclás
Rinn Ó gCuanach, Co. Phort Láirge
Roll number: 76066J**

Date of inspection: 20 November 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

Date of inspection	20 th November 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and subject-teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during four class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and subject-teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The use of Irish as the target language was excellent in the classes observed and appropriate attention was paid to enriching the students' oral and written Irish, a really commendable practice.
- The emphasis placed on the local dialect and the traditions and history of the area, during Irish lessons and as part of the daily life of the school, is highly commended.
- Plenty of opportunities for oral work were created for the students in the lessons, interactive learning was part of almost every lesson observed and students' enthusiasm and self-confidence during Irish lessons were noteworthy.
- School management is commended for its worthwhile work on the creation of the school's Irish language policy and for the guide for teachers on what constitutes 'a good lesson'.
- The use made of information and communication technology (ICT) during the majority of the Irish lessons is commended.
- The results achieved in Irish in the state examinations are very good and all students in the school study Irish at higher level except for a very occasional student with severe learning difficulties.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the use of ICT be further developed and more widely used during Irish lessons, to support student learning.
 - It is recommended that the teachers ensure that interactive learning is part of the structure of all the Irish lessons.
 - It is recommended that the teachers discuss strategies for focusing students' attention on the importance of accuracy in their written Irish and on accuracy in general.
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INTRODUCTION

Meánscoil San Nioclás is a small Gaeltacht school with a current enrolment of 132 students. The number of students is increasing steadily in recent years and that growth pattern is expected to continue into the future, with students coming from a fairly extensive catchment area. A range of programmes is provided in the school, including the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- On the whole, the standard of teaching and learning ranged from very good to excellent, with a little scope for improvement in one case.
- The use of Irish as the target language during the lessons was excellent, as might be expected in a Gaeltacht school. Explanations of new words and phrases were given in simple Irish and English was seldom heard in any lesson.
- Constant use was made of open and closed questions and, frequently, of higher-order questions. The students answered enthusiastically and eagerly and the self-confidence of the majority of students was evident during the lessons.
- The previous day's work was usually revised at the start of lessons; homework was frequently dealt with at this stage also and students read samples of their work aloud in class. The standard of the work was frequently very high indeed.
- The teaching of grammar was woven throughout the lessons observed, a praiseworthy approach. It was evident from the examination of students' copybooks that homework is regularly set and carefully corrected. Teachers should have some discussions on various strategies to focus students' attention on the importance of accuracy in their written Irish, on peer-evaluation and on self-evaluation.
- Appropriate attention was paid to new key-words during the lessons observed. It was evident that the teachers were also focused on enriching students' Irish, both written and oral.
- The school management and the Irish-teaching staff deserve great credit for their emphasis on the local dialect and on the traditions and history of the area. The school has a vitally important role to play in this respect, because it is located in a small Gaeltacht community, with constant pressure from outside on the traditions and heritage of the locality.
- The telling of a story about the local area in one case observed was commendable as was the way in which the teacher enhanced the subject-matter by drawing on her own experience, and the way in which she used that information to further stimulate the students' interest in the topic.
- In one case observed, students were asked to work in pairs to produce pieces of poetry and this strategy worked very well, with the students tackling their task diligently and enthusiastically.
- The use made of ICT in most of the classes observed was commendable. It would be worth developing and extending its use in class, to support students' learning. It is an invaluable resource and it could be used to greater advantage over time.

- In most of the lessons observed, use was made of pair-work, an effective way to facilitate interactive learning; it is recommended that its use be extended to all Irish lessons.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Five class-periods per week are available for all year-groups in junior cycle and for TY, including one class on the traditional-singing heritage of the Ring area. Six periods per week are provided for fifth and sixth years, with a traditional-singing class included here also. This is a really satisfactory provision and once again the focus on the musical heritage of the area is commended.
- A considerable number of occasions and events are organised in the school, or arrangements are made for students to attend language events outside school, to support their understanding and experience of Irish as a living language and as the language of the Gaeltacht. The school management is commended for their support for and commitment to these really important aspects of their work.
- Every student preparing for the Junior Certificate takes part in the JCSP and teachers in the school have worked really hard to create higher-level profiles in Irish for the programme. Every student takes higher-level Irish in the state examinations, except those who have severe learning difficulties. The results in Irish are very good and have been improving in recent years.
- Extra help in Irish is provided for students who came from English-medium primary schools. The language assistant gives extra classes after school for those who need them.
- Recognition is given to students' oral ability in Irish in the school tests. This is good practice and it is recommended that the results of the oral tests be indicated, for parents' benefit, as a separate mark in the school reports.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The guide for teachers on what constitutes 'a good lesson', provided by school management for the support and guidance of the staff, is highly commended.
- A co-ordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of Irish is nominated, on an annual basis, from among the teachers of Irish. The Irish teachers meet once a month, to discuss matters concerning the teaching of the language and the organisation of the broad co-curricular and cross-curricular programme for Irish offered in the school. It would be worth keeping minutes of these meetings, as an official record of what was discussed and agreed.
- A plan for the teaching and learning of Irish was made available on the day of the evaluation and the work completed to date on planning is commended.
- Much work has been completed to date on a policy on Irish to support the learning of the language in class and to enhance the Irish atmosphere in the school: this is commended. It is evident that the management and staff of the school have considered and discussed these really important matters thoroughly.
- Teachers have begun an analysis of the results of the state examinations and the outcome of this analysis will be made available to the board of management and the parents' association from next year onwards. This is good practice.

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