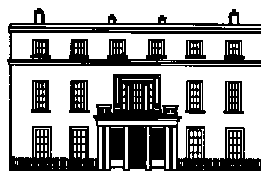


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Beneavin De La Salle College
Finglas, Dublin 11
Roll Number: 605110

Date of inspection: 7 November 2013



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

Dates of inspection	6 and 7 November 2013
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 five class periods• Review of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching was good in almost all lessons and short-term preparation was good in those lessons and focussed on the learning objectives.
- The quality of learning was good in most lessons and speaking the language was the biggest challenge facing the students in all lessons.
- There was a high attendance at the Irish lessons.
- A supportive environment for learning in the subject has been established in the classrooms in which notices and posters in Irish were displayed on the walls together with essential grammatical material as reminders and reinforcement of the correct use of the language.
- The quality of the students' work in the copybooks was good in general and the teachers had written in valuable guidance and affirmation of the students' efforts.
- Excellent analysis was provided of the students' attainments in the subject and the Irish department has set out an objective to increase the number of students undertaking higher level.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that learning outcomes be communicated clearly at the start and confirmed with the students that they understand the challenge set for them before the lesson commences.
 - It is recommended to increase the number of opportunities available in the Irish lesson for the students to communicate on a one-to-one basis and particularly to give the students practice in asking questions, in addition to answering questions.
 - It would be well worth while including ability in speaking Irish as part of the assessment methods in the in-house examinations.
 - It would be worth setting out a more focussed strategy for the good objective of encouraging more students to attempt higher level in the subject.
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INTRODUCTION

Beneavin College is a voluntary secondary school for boys. There are 488 students enrolled for the 2013/14 school year. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools scheme (DEIS). The available programmes are Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme, established Leaving Certificate and Leaving Certificate Applied. Transition Year is not available.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was good in nearly every lesson observed and short-term preparation was good in those, and focussed on learning objectives. In a particular case both teaching and learning suffered from the quality of preparation which did not properly take into account the material already covered.
- Strengths in learning were evident in the majority of lessons and there was evidence that the students understood the learning objectives and that they were being achieved. In the best case the learning objectives were revisited periodically and the amount of progress made was confirmed with the students. In other cases, however, the learning objectives were communicated too hurriedly.
- In one case the challenge set for learners was too ambitious; ambition is always commendable but it is recommended that learning objectives be set which are more in keeping with the students' ability, even if they are more limited objectives.
- Attendance was high at the Irish lessons and teachers were keeping a record of attendance for their own classes.
- Teachers were using the target language naturally, which provided a good exemplar for the students. In order to take the students a step further in spoken language acquisition, there must be an increase in the number of opportunities available to them in the lesson for communication and to gain experience of asking questions in addition to answering questions.
- It is recommended that aural comprehension texts be shared with students and encouraging them to compose questions as a support to making questioners of them, as opposed to responders only.
- Continuity in learning was evident in the lessons; this provided the opportunity to give praise early in the lesson as encouragement to the students in learning, especially weak learners.
- There were worthwhile opportunities available for active learning, particularly for weak students. Students were well-challenged with language games and these provided productive practice in reading, speaking, listening and writing skills.
- Certain students had difficulties with the correct pronunciation of words, including basic words. This was dealt with sympathetically and attention was paid to the amount of pronunciation which was accurate rather than the difficulties the students had with it, an approach which had a successful outcome. Very good care was taken in a junior class with distinguishing the pronunciation of similar common words such as 'chuig', 'chuaigh' and 'cúig'.
- For the most part good resources had been prepared which supported learning significantly, including printed handouts, containing information gaps to be filled, and pictures from the Internet which were used creatively and humorously.

- A good questioning ability was shown in teaching and attention was paid to differentiating questions; it would be worth enabling the students themselves to compose and ask questions.
- In most of the lessons relevant homework was assigned which reinforced learning.
- The copybooks were neat, they contained helpful guidance from the teacher and very good recognition of the students' efforts. In certain cases there was strong evidence of assessment for learning in the approach regarding the recording of the "pupil's targets" in the copybook. It is highly commendable that the student is encouraged to take responsibility for his own learning.
- It is recommended that care be taken with the overuse of translation to English as a sign of the students' comprehension or the learners' efforts will be spent on translation.
- The Irish department's assessment methods should include spoken Irish ability in the house examinations.
- There was a very positive atmosphere in all the lessons and management of lessons was of a high quality.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good provision for the subject on the school timetable and there is a very good distribution of the lessons throughout the week.
- The proportion of students with exemption from Irish is at a fairly low level on a national basis and students with exemptions are studying the subject with the school's encouragement.
- Though a minority of students undertake higher level, it is ensured that this choice is always available in the mixed-ability grouping available for the subject throughout.
- It is good that the department has made a comprehensive analysis of attainments in the certificate examinations, and based on that, that there is now an objective to encourage more students to undertake higher level from the outset. It would be worth setting out a more focussed strategy in order to achieve this worthy objective.
- Each of the five teachers has Irish to degree level and every encouragement and opportunity has been provided to the members of the Irish department to attend continuing professional development, and all the members have availed of this.
- A supportive environment for learning in the subject has been established in the classrooms in which notices and posters in Irish were displayed on the walls together with essential grammatical material as reminders and reinforcement of the correct use of the language.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A plan for the subject has been set out, and work schemes, which cover the major teaching and learning points.
- When reviewing the subject plan in future, it would be worth aiming to set out a learning objectives theme, which would clarify the amount of learning in the language which would be reasonably expected of the students in each year of their course of study, together with exemplars of students' authentic work as a guide to this.

- Short-term planning was good in the lessons except for one case.
 - The planning pays attention to the development of literacy and numeracy requirements in the subject and an Irish-language books section is to be developed in the school library as part of this.
 - While not observed during the inspection, the management and Irish teachers confirmed that items from Irish-language television programmes are used in lessons on a regular basis, a good practice which would be commendable.
 - Though there was strong evidence of great challenges facing students when starting in the school in English-language literacy capacity, which is the students' mother-tongue, a positive attitude and approach were prominent in the Irish department's planning work and discussions.
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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 was delighted with the findings of the report which served to highlight the good practice in place in the Irish Department. It was great to see that there was significant evidence of a very positive atmosphere in all the lessons and management of lessons was of a high quality. The inspector also noted that there is very good provision for the subject on the school timetable and there is a very good distribution of the lessons throughout the week. It was positive that the inspector noted that we encourage students with exemptions from Irish to nonetheless study Irish with an overall low level of exemptions in the College compared to the national average.

It was noted that a positive attitude and approach were prominent in the Irish department's planning work and discussions and tremendous to see that the quality of teaching and learning was good in almost all lessons and short-term preparation was good in those lessons and focussed on the learning objectives. It was also very encouraging to find that the attendance at the Irish lessons was high.

The inspector also noted that the analysis of the students' attainments in the subject was excellent and the Irish department has set out an objective to increase the number of students undertaking higher level.

The Board is delighted that the inspector found evidence of so much positive work in the Irish Department with evidence of such a positive attitude towards the language.

Overall, the Board is pleased that the report is so positive because Beneavin De La Salle College is very proud of the tradition of supporting students to be successful and positive towards their own national language.

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 agreed with all of the recommendations of the report in that they will serve to strengthen the provision for all of our students and ensure that the school offers an even more effective service and improves the provision of Irish in the College. The inspector noted that learning outcomes need to be clear and reiterated in each class and it should be noted that since the inspection the full staff have engaged in CPD on setting clear learning targets and strategies for improving learning through the effective use of targets in every classroom. We have also had sessions on other aspects of assessment for learning focusing on effective questioning and feedback. Additionally, the Irish Department have had an opportunity to meet and set out a plan for addressing each of the recommendations and particularly increasing the number of students taking higher level. It is hoped that through the introduction of transition year next year it will facilitate a total focus on the spoken language.

The board supports the management in ensuring planning time for the Irish subject department to examine the data on student achievement in certificate examinations be analysed and used as a basis for planning.

The Board would like to express its thanks for such a supportive report that served to help the Board to get an insight into the Irish Department and provide a clear road map towards improvement.

The board will strive to ensure that all recommendations are implemented.