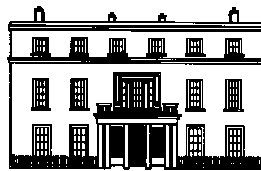


**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Subject Inspection of Irish  
REPORT**

**St Declan's Community College  
Kilmacthomas, County Waterford  
Roll Number: 72230W**

**Date of inspection: 10 May 2013**



**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>	10 May 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in the classes observed.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and interaction was good on the whole, in the classes visited.
- The use of information and communications technology (ICT) observed in certain cases is commended.
- Much work has been done on the recommendations of a previous Irish Inspection (Irish Inspection 2008) and the teachers' commitment in this respect is commended.
- Pair work and other collaborative learning strategies were used in a couple of cases observed but opportunities were not availed of to encourage students to use the target language in many other classes.
- A variety of classroom activities was used during the lessons observed and work was well paced as a result.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- More opportunities should be provided for students to speak the target language during Irish lessons through regular use of strategies such as pair work, group work and role play.
  - It is recommended that collaborative learning be a central part of all Irish lessons.
  - It is recommended that the students' communications skills be assessed in all year groups and that the results of those assessments be made available to parents as a separate mark.
  - Irish teachers need to agree on a range of strategies to address students' grammatical and pronunciation errors.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

St Declan's Community College is a co-educational post-primary school operating, at the time of the inspection, under the auspices of County Waterford Vocational Educational Committee (VEC), now known as Waterford and Wexford Education and Training Board (ETB), with a current enrolment of 689 students. The school provides a wide range of programmes including the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall in the classes observed with some scope for improvement in certain aspects of teaching.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and interaction was good in the classes observed and the teachers' commitment to the use of the target language is commended.
- The students were quiet and mannerly during the lessons observed and the teachers succeeded in getting them to engage with their learning, especially in relation to written tasks. There was a lack of opportunities for students to be active in other ways, however, and it is recommended that collaborative learning be used to facilitate and encourage this participation.
- Pair work was used in a couple of lessons observed to give students the opportunity to use the target language functionally in class. There was a lack of opportunity to interact in the target language in other lessons, however, and teachers are advised to ensure that genuine opportunities for communication are provided regularly in lessons through the use of games, pair work, group work and role-play. It is essential that students have the opportunity to practice and implement what they learn.
- There was a reasonably wide range of resources and materials used during the lessons. Use was made, for example, of some digital material based on content from the Leaving Certificate course and of a couple of excerpts from YouTube, as well as some music as background in another lesson. The progress made by teachers in the range of ICT use is acknowledged. The good efforts made during one lesson to place learning material in a stimulating and interesting contemporary context for the students, were noted.
- It is recommended that the range of resources and materials used during lessons be increased. It is necessary to ensure that resources are of a good standard and that the content is interesting and attractive to the students.
- The classroom walls were decorated in an attractive and stimulating way with material relevant to learning the language and students' work on display. In a couple of cases observed good quality notes and information sheets were prepared and distributed to the students and the teachers' work in this regard is commended.
- A variety of classroom activities was central to each lesson observed and this approach contributed greatly to ensuring a good pace for the work.
- In one case observed, the students' attention was drawn to the proverb of the day and they had to use this proverb in their own written work. This approach is commended. The teachers are advised to discuss various ways to draw attention to the students' pronunciation and grammatical errors. Not enough emphasis was placed on this aspect of learning the language during the lessons.

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

- There are four periods per week for all classes in the junior cycle. It is recommended, if possible, that an additional class be provided for at least one of those year groups. There are three periods available for TY and there is a very satisfactory provision for fifth and sixth year, with six periods available.
- The teachers' efforts to provide opportunities for students to experience Irish as a living language, through celebrating Seachtain na Gaeilge, are commended. The TY students participate in organising some of the Seachtain na Gaeilge activities and this is commendable. A conversation group is organised once a week for first-year students. Some recommendations were made during the inspection regarding other extra-curricular and cross-curricular activities which could be organised during the year to support the teachers' efforts in the lessons.
- Students' communications skills are assessed in the senior classes. It is recommended that this best practice be built upon and that students' communications skills be assessed in all year groups. The results of this assessment should be shown in school reports as a separate mark.
- All the teachers attended in-service courses provided by the former Second Level Support Service for Irish and some of the recommendations from those courses were reflected in the classes, especially in relation to the use of ICT. It is recommended that other strategies be considered which could be implemented during the lessons.
- A certain number of Gaeltacht scholarships are provided in the school, with support from the VEC. It is beneficial to students to be given the opportunity to spend a period of time in the Gaeltacht.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- One of the teachers is nominated as coordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of the language and this responsibility is rotated among the teachers, a commendable practice. The co-ordinator's role is clearly defined.
- The teachers meet regularly to discuss issues relating to teaching and learning as well as focussing on aspects of planning and on the organisation of Seachtain na Gaeilge and activities for TY.
- A plan was provided for teaching and learning of Irish during the evaluation. The work completed on this plan to date is commended. It is recommended that work on the schemes of work continue as specified during the evaluation.
- The results of the certificate examinations are analysed and are compared to national norms. These results are shared with the entire school community.
- A recommendation (Irish Inspection 2008) was made in relation to greatly reducing the number of students undertaking foundation-level Irish in the state examinations. This has been implemented very effectively indeed and the teachers' work in this regard is greatly commended. No student has undertaken Irish at foundation level for the past couple of years.

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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 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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