

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa
Clara, County Offaly

Roll number: 72530L

Date of inspection: 9 March 2016



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	8 and 9 March 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Preliminary evaluation meeting with the coordinator• Observation of teaching and learning during five class periods	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Interaction with the students• Review of samples of the students' work and samples of their school diaries• Feedback to individual teachers• Feedback to senior management and the teachers of Irish

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or better in the majority of the classes and fair in one case.
- Irish was used as the language of instruction and communication in all classes and the use of the target language among students was of very good quality in certain cases, especially in the junior cycle.
- Worthwhile efforts are being made to raise the students' expectations regarding learning Irish, to develop a positive attitude towards the language and to increase the use of the language as the medium of communication outside the classroom.
- All of the main language skills are included in assessment.
- A very good level of support is provided by management and it was clear that there is very good cooperation among the Irish teaching team.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the expected learning outcomes are included in the plans for the different year groups and that the Transition Year plan is fully reviewed in line with the principles of the programme.
 - It is recommended to focus on differentiation of learning in order to ensure appropriate learning challenges for all students.
 - It is recommended that particular care is taken to plan, design and implement tasks that require students to cooperate in learning.
 - It is recommended that practices for recording homework and corrections to written work are improved upon.
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INTRODUCTION

Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa is a co-educational school operating under the trusteeship of Laois and Offaly Education and Training Board. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) scheme. There are 248 students enrolled in the school and the Transition Year is delivered on an optional basis. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good or better in the majority of the classes and fair in one case.
- Irish was the language of instruction and communication in all classes. The good use of the target language among students in certain cases, especially in the junior cycle, showed that this is their normal experience. Those cases in which students' ability to formulate and ask questions was developed are especially commended.
- In all cases, the expected outcomes of the class were shared with the students. The best practice was observed in those cases in which students were informed of what they would be able to do as a result of the learning and where the expectations were both high and appropriate.
- In almost all classes, the students had opportunities to cooperate in learning. Certain aspects of the organisation of pair and group work tasks were of very good quality in all cases. It is recommended that the staff's experience is utilised in order to optimise the planning, design and implementation of tasks. The language required by the students to carry out work through the medium of Irish must also be included.
- There were mixed abilities in all classes but learning was differentiated in only a small number of cases. In addition to the teacher's questioning, it is recommended that the range of strategies used to ensure appropriate learning challenges for all students is increased, especially for the most capable students.
- In order to optimise questioning in class, it is recommended that students are given time to respond and, in certain cases, that more students are given an opportunity to respond.
- The behaviour of students in all classes was very good and they were greatly commended.
- The school's numeracy strategy was implemented in each class.
- In the majority of classes, the learning intentions were used effectively to assess learning progress during and at the end of class. It is recommended that this good practice is extended.
- Analysis is carried out on the participation and attainment of students in certificate examinations. Both the management team and the department recognise the scope to increase the number of students who sit the higher level examinations. Worthwhile goals have been developed and agreed accordingly.
- The department's assessment practices were of good quality and include assessment of the four main language skills for each year group and the aim that third year students will sit the Junior Certificate's optional oral examination from 2017 onwards.

- Homework was given and checked in all classes. Although this is standard practice, a review of a sample of students' diaries showed that they don't always record the type of work involved, including in the Transition Year. It is recommended that this is reviewed and that it is ensured that the tasks are worthwhile and appropriately challenging.
- The copy books were not in appropriate order in the majority of cases. It is recommended that focus is placed on developing the students' organisational skills in line with school policy.
- There were some examples of constructive corrections in written work but it was clear that this was not a regular practice in all classes.
- It is recommended that the school's homework and assessment policies are implemented and that providing constructive feedback on written work becomes general practice. It is also recommended that correction procedures are included under the teacher's responsibilities in the next review of the relevant policy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Very good provision is made for the subject and very good support is received from management.
- Worthwhile efforts were being made by the Irish teaching staff, with the support of the management team, to promote Irish as the medium of communication, to nurture a positive attitude to the language among students and to broaden their experience of it.
- The spoken Irish competence of each teacher was satisfactory for teaching purposes.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The Irish department meets regularly and, in line with best practice, the teachers take turns in the role as coordinator for a period of more than one year at a time.
- It was clear that there is very open communication and very good cooperation among the team.
- It is to be commended that the results of certificate examinations are discussed at departmental meetings. As part of this, it is recommended that pedagogical issues are reviewed and discussed, with particular emphasis on differentiation of learning.
- Although the plans for the different year groups showed that priority is given to spoken Irish and that development of language skills and literature are integrated, the plans did not give any indication of the learning outcomes expected at different stages.
- The planning documents should be reviewed in order for them to be of merit in the teaching and learning process and in monitoring the identified targets for improvement. Learning outcomes that will reflect the spiral development of learning and that will lead the design of in-house examinations and learning intentions for individual classes should be set out in the review. As well as this, it is recommended that the plan for first year is based more on the students' communication needs and their immediate surroundings.
- The plan for the Transition Year was of poor quality. While the aims of the course were good, there was no substance to the content itself. It is recommended that this plan is reviewed in its entirety.

- Monitoring notes were to be found in a couple of plans. This practice is commendable and should be extended as part of the self-evaluation process.
 - Good planning and preparation was carried out for the majority of classes.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, the deputy principal and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

As a school we are always striving to provide the best educational experience for our pupils and to improve programmes on offer. Our Mission Statement states *Ard Scoil Chiaráin Naofa promotes the holistic educational development of all within the school community. We strive for academic excellence and aim to maximise the potential of each individual in a safe, caring and respectful environment.* We welcome the acknowledgement of the very good practices in the report including use of target language, sharing of outcomes, students opportunities to co-operate in learning, behaviour of students, implementation of the numeracy strategy, very good support and provision for Irish from management and the efforts being made to promote Irish and nurture a positive attitude to the language. We also appreciate opportunities for evaluation and feedback.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Following the inspection in March 2016 we reviewed our provision for Irish. The Irish department, with the support of school management, took the initiative to request additional outside support and to this end invited the PDST into the school to work with them on reviewing and improving the Irish Subject Plans. This review included a complete overhaul of the Irish and Transition Year Plan. Therefore since the date of the inspection, the main recommendations have been addressed.