

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Christian Brothers School
Dungarvan, Co Waterford**

Roll number: 64880T

Date of inspection: 1 December 2011



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	1 December 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and the subject teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and the subject teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and interaction was good, on the whole, in the lessons observed. It is recommended that teachers avoid the use of translation from Irish to English where it is not necessary.
- Very effective pair-work and group-work was observed in some of the lessons and this approach should be extended to all classes.
- A variety of activities was used in certain classes, some based on the suggestions of the Second Level Support Service for Irish, and the interactive learning in these cases is commended.
- At the outset of some of the classes, the students were informed about the learning objectives of the lesson; it is recommended that this practice be extended to all classes.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used in a few lessons observed, but its use could be further developed and extended.
- Good, comprehensive preparation had been done for the classes observed.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the use of ICT be extended to other classes and that more sophisticated use of ICT be gradually developed.
- It is recommended that a cross-curricular and co-curricular programme be devised for Irish, with a view to developing and promoting students' interest in learning the language.
- The communicative skills of all students should be assessed, from first year right through, and the results of those assessments should be made available to parents as a separate mark in the reports sent home.
- It is recommended that more comprehensive information be given in the schemes of work and that a more complete plan for Transition Year Irish be made available.

INTRODUCTION

The Christian Brothers School is a voluntary secondary school for boys, with an enrolment of 291 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate as well as some Post-Leaving Certificate courses.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The use of Irish as the language of management, interaction and instruction was good, on the whole, in the classes observed. In one case observed, too much use was made of translation from Irish to English to ensure that students understood the subject-matter of the lesson. It is recommended that this practice be avoided as far as possible and alternative strategies used to ensure that students understand what is going on in class.
- Very effective use was made of pair-work and group-work to get students talking to one another in the target language and it is recommended that this approach be extended to all classes. The allocation of time to these activities must be carefully monitored, in order to make the most effective use of the class-period in the context of developing all the language skills. It is recommended that a range of activities be used during lessons to maintain and promote student interest and attention.
- In certain classes, the students made significant efforts to answer the teachers' questions in Irish and to communicate with one another in the target language during classroom activities. It was evident that they were accustomed to this and that they were comfortable with this approach. It is recommended that this approach be used in the ordinary-level classes also, according to students' level of ability and competence.
- Continuous use was made of repetition in certain cases, to ensure that the students could pronounce new words and phrases and it is recommended that this approach be extended to all classes. Some rote learning was involved in other cases and it is recommended that attention be focused on students' ability to use the words and sentences in various relevant contexts.
- In certain cases observed, students' errors of grammar and pronunciation were corrected. More attention must be paid to this aspect of teaching the language especially in the case of the higher-level classes.
- A glossary was written on the whiteboard for students engaged in a task in one case observed. It is recommended that this practice be built on and that other practices be developed to support the development and promotion of literacy in Irish, for example, materials relevant to teaching and learning the language, key-words, key phrases and some Irish verbs might be displayed in the classrooms, as far as possible. Extra support should be offered to ordinary-level classes in particular.
- ICT was used in a few cases observed and that is commended. It is evident, however, that the use of this resource in teaching and learning Irish is only in its infancy in the school. It is recommended that the teachers develop their ICT skills and ensure that the most effective and beneficial use is made of this valuable resource in teaching the language.
- In recent years, some of the teachers of Irish attended in-service courses offered by the Second Level Support Service for Irish and recommendations made at those courses were being implemented in some of the classes observed. The teachers of Irish are commended for the practical use they make of the information obtained at the courses. Every teacher of Irish should attend the in-service courses.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for Irish on the school timetable is satisfactory, with five class-periods per week in first and second year and four periods per week in third year. Three periods per week are provided for TY and six per week in fifth and sixth year.
- Certain efforts are made in the school to provide a co-curricular programme in Irish for students by celebrating *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. It is recommended that these efforts be added to and that a wider programme of events and occasions be organised, throughout the school year, to support the teaching and learning of the language.
- Resources and aids for the teaching and learning of Irish are requested by teachers on an individual basis. It is recommended that the teachers discuss their needs with one another and submit their agreed request to the principal on an organised basis. It is also necessary to be on the alert for new resources and materials coming on the market. An inventory of resources should be compiled and that list included as part of the plan for the teaching and learning of the language.
- At present, oral exams are conducted for students in fifth and sixth year. It is recommended that this practice be extended to all classes, so that every student in the school takes oral exams from first year right through. The results of this assessment should be indicated as a separate mark in the school reports sent home. It is recommended that parents of all students in the school be formally informed of imminent changes in the state examinations, in the area of spoken Irish.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A co-ordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of Irish is nominated from among the subject teachers. The teachers of Irish meet formally once a year or more often if necessary. At present, teachers teaching higher-level classes work hand in hand and, similarly, those teaching ordinary-level classes consult one another. It is recommended that there should be a more agreed approach in operation, with policies and approaches decided among all the teachers together and not on a basis of higher level or lower level.
- A plan for the teaching and learning of the language was made available on the day of the inspection. The work completed to date on that plan is commended, but it is now necessary to develop the plan and particularly to make much more comprehensive information available in the schemes of work. It is recommended that the schemes include details of the topics to be covered, the teaching methodologies, resources and materials to be used in class – ICT included, learning objectives and assessment methods.
- It is recommended that a comprehensive, interesting, attractive programme be designed, for teaching Irish in Transition Year.
- Comprehensive planning had been carried out for all the classes observed.

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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