

Department of Education and Skills

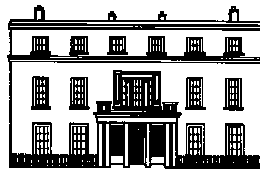
Subject Inspection of Irish

REPORT

**Loreto Secondary School
Grange Road,
Kilkenny,
County Kilkenny**

Roll number: 61580P

Date of inspection: 8 May 2013



**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	8 May 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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The use of Irish as the medium of classroom management, instruction and communication was excellent in the lessons observed and the teachers' attention to the use of the target language is commended.
- The standard of teaching and learning was very good overall with some examples of excellent practice.
- Successful efforts were made to create communicative opportunities for the students during their lessons, by using pair work, language games and group work.
- A variety of activities was a feature of all lessons and this ensured a good pace generally.
- All of the language skills were appropriately covered in the lessons observed and this successful practice is commendable.
- The high number of students that take higher-level Irish in the state examinations is noted.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that a wider range of materials and resources are used during the Irish lessons in order to interest the students in the subject matter of the lessons.
 - A wider range of sample questions and language exemplars should be used to support student learning during the lessons.
 - A review of the programme for Irish in Transition Year (TY) is advised, to ensure that the students are presented with an innovative creative programme that will add to their interest in learning the language.
-

INTRODUCTION

Loreto Secondary School, Kilkenny is a voluntary secondary school for girls, with 836 students enrolled. The school offers a wide range of programme including the Junior Certificate, Transition Year, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Cert Applied (LCA).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The use of Irish as the medium of classroom management, instruction and communication was excellent in the lessons observed and the teachers' attention to the use of the target language is commended. The students were reminded to speak Irish among themselves while engaged in classroom activities in some of the lessons observed and this commendable practice could be extended.
- The standard of the teaching and learning was very good in general with some examples of excellent practice.
- The aims of the lesson were stated at the beginning of all the lessons observed. The students were also given learning objectives in some cases and this good practice could be further extended. Learning objectives should be reviewed at the end to ensure that the aims and objectives of the lesson were achieved.
- Successful efforts were made to create communicative opportunities for the students during lessons, by using pair work and group work and this emphasis on the applied use of the target language is commended. It is recommended that the effectiveness of these strategies are kept under review to ensure that real situations for communication are being provided for the students and that they are making the best use of them.
- While pair work is in progress it is recommended that sample questions and language exemplars be provided for the students to help them to compose correct sentences from the outset. This is an effective strategy to support differentiation where material can be provided to cater for a variety of ability levels.
- The lessons comprised a variety of activities and this ensured a steady pace during all of them. There was good continuity in the learning also where the teachers started with work already covered and homework was set based on the material in the lesson.
- The students were engaged in learning and participated in the class activities during the lessons observed. However, it is recommended that the range of resources used be augmented in order to make the subject matter of the lessons more attractive and interesting for students. Music could be more widely used as well as video clips, podcasts, photographs, pictures, charts and any other materials that would contextualise the lesson content in a contemporary setting.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used during some lessons. This greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the teaching in these cases but the use of ICT could be further extended to other lessons in order to support the students' learning.
- A certain amount of material pertaining to the teaching and learning of Irish was displayed on the walls. Some posters and work by the students was observed. The attempts to create a positive learning environment for Irish are commendable. The support materials could be supplemented however, in order to support the students' learning and to augment literacy and numeracy strategies.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for Irish on the timetable is satisfactory with four periods per week in first year and five periods per week in second and third year. There are four periods available for TY and five periods per week in fifth and sixth year.
- Commendable efforts are made in the school to extend the students' experience of Irish as a living language by celebrating Seachtain na Gaeilge. Suggestions around ways to develop a wider extracurricular and cross curricular programme during the year were provided during the evaluation.
- The students' communicative skills are evaluated through oral exams organised during the senior cycle, including TY. Oral exams are organised twice a year for the sixth-year students. This laudable practice should be extended to every year group and a formal assessment made of the students' communicative skills. The results of this assessment should be shown as a separate item in school reports.
- The Irish teachers attended all the in-service courses provided by the Second Level Support Service for Irish and the recommendations and strategies advised by the service were noted in many of the lessons observed, which added to the effectiveness of the teaching and learning.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- One of the teachers is nominated as coordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of the language. In order to allow every teacher to take on this role it is recommended that the coordinator's responsibilities be rotated every second year or so.
- It was reported that the Irish teachers meet on a formal basis once per term and more often informally if the need arises.
- A plan for the teaching and learning of the language was presented on the day of the evaluation. The way in which separate aims were laid out for every school year is laudable and this means that teachers have new objectives every year. It would be advisable to include a review of these objectives in the plan also, in order to see the progression from year to year.
- Work schemes were available for all of the year groups and their lay out is commendable. Further information on the use of teaching resources and the integration of teaching methodologies should be added, along with an assessment of learning objectives.
- A review of the TY Irish programme is recommended so that an innovative interesting inspiring programme can be devised. This should support students' interest in learning the language and add to their understanding of the importance of the current context of the language in Irish society.
- The high number of students that take higher-level Irish in the state examinations is noted and the teachers' efforts in encouraging students to undertake the higher-level courses are acknowledged.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and with 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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Published December 2013

Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The Board of Management welcomes the report of the subject inspection of Irish. The commendations contained in the main findings are a tribute to the continued dedication and skill of the teachers in our Irish department. The inspection was found to be a very beneficial experience and one which provided excellent scope for reflection, evaluation and the assimilation of ideas and suggestions made by the Inspector.

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

Since the date of the inspection, our Irish teachers have been working to develop the transition year programme in line with the suggestions made and this review has been completed. The subject department is happy that a wide range of materials and resources are used in the teaching of Irish and would be interested to explore this topic further with the assistance of the Inspectorate.