

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of Irish**  
**REPORT**

**Coláiste Choilm**  
**Swords, County Dublin**  
**Roll number: 60383I**

**Date of inspection: 1 May 2012**



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**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	30 April, 1 May 2012
<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 individual students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' written work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in a small number of the six lessons that were visited.
- In the best lessons, the learning objectives were clearly communicated and the planning of those lessons was well aligned to their achievement.
- Time was provided to practise ordinary conversation in a small number of cases only.
- Whole-school support for the subject is good. Two full Gaeltacht scholarships have been provided in 2012 for the first time, funded by the school.
- It is to be commended that in 2011/12 two higher-level classes have been formed in fifth year for the first time, based on student demand, yet the trend towards foundation level in the Leaving Certificate participation rates in the subject is a cause of concern.
- It is good that the award of 30% of the marks for oral Irish in the fifth year house examinations has been agreed.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- There should be a far greater focus on practising the spoken language with the students from the outset.
  - Management is urged to engage with the Irish department in the interests of raising morale and encouraging improvements in the subject.
  - Information and communications technology (ICT) resources should be used effectively in order to expose students to the spoken language.
  - The subject plan and schemes of work need review and inspiration.
-

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Choilm is an all-boys voluntary secondary school. The school offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year programme, and the established Leaving Certificate. Enrolment for the school year 2011/12 stands at 614 students. The proportion of students holding an exemption from studying Irish is low, and is less than five per cent of the total.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in a small number of the six lessons visited. In other cases the low-key manner in which the lesson content was introduced saw the students' answering in turn lacking in inspiration. There was strong evidence in one lesson that the students were comfortable in using and manipulating the language. The area most in need of development is the students' oral capacity in the language.
- In the most successful lessons, the learning targets were identified clearly and the planning of these lessons was well focused on their achievement. In other cases, the planning was not appropriate to the class being taught. Appropriate learning targets should be identified in the planning stage and shared with the students during the lesson.
- The prominence of the target language in teaching in all the lessons was good; the students' responses and questions however, except in a small number of cases, did not indicate a good understanding of directions given in Irish.
- The aim of encouraging as many students as possible to study higher level is good; the students' capacity in Irish in one higher-level class, however, was not in line with higher level at all. This arrangement does not benefit students.
- Time to practise general conversation was provided in a small number of cases only. This aspect should be developed so that students are expected from the outset to express themselves orally.
- The good practice of providing opportunities for active work to students was noted in particular lessons. In certain instances however the students conversed in English; this practice should not be permitted.
- ICT resources were used but in general their function was limited. ICT resources should also be used to expose students to the use of the spoken language; this did not occur.
- Classroom atmosphere was good, save in one instance. This co-operation from the students indicates that a positive co-operative atmosphere obtains for teaching the subject.
- The quality of work in students' copybooks was generally satisfactory, and was very good in certain cases; there was considerable variation however in the level of recognition and advice written in for students. Recognition for work in copybooks should be the norm.

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

- A note of pessimism regarding the status of Irish in the school was apparent among members of the Irish department. Management is urged to engage with the Irish department in the interests of raising morale and encouraging improvements in the subject.

- Whole-school support for the subject is evident. Two full Gaeltacht scholarships have been provided for the first time in 2012 from school resources. The Irish department expressed concern at the low response from students in applying for these scholarships.
- Timetabled provision for Irish at senior cycle is satisfactory, with five periods per week, and the four periods in TY is very good. The more limited junior cycle provision is under review with a view to providing a fifth period in second year. The daily even distribution of Irish lessons at senior cycle is very good. It is recommended that the uneven distribution of lessons across second year, and in one first year class, be reviewed.
- The formation of a second higher-level class in fifth year in 2011/12 in response to student demand was a very good development.
- The trend towards foundation level evident in the Leaving Certificate participation rates in the subject is a concern. School data indicated that the proportion of students taking foundation level increased threefold in the period 2009 to 2011. These figures are wholly out of line with the very low proportion of students who take foundation level at Junior Certificate. The reasons for this should be explored urgently and a remedy implemented.
- Management supports continuing professional development and almost all teachers have a good attendance record at support service activities for Irish. One teacher holds a qualification in the use of ICT resources in teaching and learning Irish.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The subject plan for Irish and schemes of work merit review and inspiration. It is recommended that the review prioritise the first year plan and the far greater promotion of spoken Irish.
- Learning outcomes need to be specified from year to year and from one level to another. These should not be confused with the topics that are covered from year to year.
- Developing a language passport with TY students would be a good initiative to record an account of their progress in language skills in the course of the year.
- The subject plan and schemes of work should include teaching methodologies that ensure an experience of active learning for students. Students should understand from the outset that the spoken language will be central to lessons and assessment.
- It is good that the award of 30% of the marks for spoken Irish has been agreed for the fifth-year house examinations; students' oral proficiency should be included in assessment in all years.
- An analysis of student participation rates at the various levels and of student attainment data in Irish in the certificate examinations should be part of the subject plan; this would provide a subject profile and a reference point for an improvement plan.

---

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.

*Published October 2012*