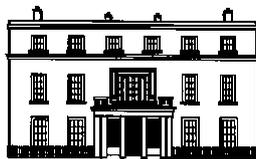


An Roinn Oideachais and Scileanna

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Midleton College
Midleton, County Cork
Roll Number: 62370J**

Date of inspection: 26 April 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:	26 April 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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in almost all lessons.
- Irish was to the fore in all classes.
- It is commendable that the assessment of the oral ability of all students forms part of in-house examinations.
- Irish has a strong profile in the school notwithstanding the large number of students who do not study the language formally.
- The openness of department's members towards continuing improvement was evident.
- Teachers engage diligently with subject-development planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that students are afforded an appropriate amount of time during lessons to practice the accurate manipulation and pronunciation of newly-taught aspects of the language.
 - It is recommended that greater use be made of cooperative learning and peer assessment tasks.
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INTRODUCTION

Midleton College is a co-educational post-primary school which operates under the auspices of the Board of Governors of Midleton College. Enrolment currently stands at 350 students. Some of these are boarding students. Thus, the school has a very wide catchment area with some of the students coming from abroad. There were three Irish teachers in the school at the time of inspection with one of them substituting for another teacher who was on maternity leave. Irish is a core subject in the school curriculum and, the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and Leaving Certificate programmes are provided to all students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- In most of the lessons observed, the quality of teaching and learning was good. Scope for development was identified in one instance.
- Irish was to the fore in all classes. The target language was used appropriately, most of the time, in that there was an appropriate balance between the teacher's voice and those of the students. It is recommended that all teachers create as many opportunities as possible for students to talk to one another. They should be mindful of the benefits of using cooperative learning and peer assessment tasks for this purpose.
- The desired learning outcomes were shared with students at the start of all lessons. Good practice was observed when they were referred to, as attained, during the lesson.
- Opportunities for students to interact with each other were frequently created. This work was successful when students were assigned a specific task and when they had practiced, in advance, the aspects of the language which they would use during the activity. When students are undertaking cooperative learning tasks, all teachers should avail of the opportunity to monitor students' work as well as to attend to their differentiated needs.
- There was a need to ensure that their fellow students are listening to students when they give feedback on behalf of a group or answer a teacher's question.
- The explanation to students of grammar points as they arise is consistent with best practice and was observed in one case.
- An area requiring development is differentiation in learning, especially in the case of students from Gaelscoileanna, many of whom display a need for greater learning challenges.
- Lessons frequently moved at an appropriate pace, especially when there were clear pre-communication, communication and post-communication periods. It is recommended that all teachers spend time on practising the accurate manipulation and pronunciation of newly-taught aspects of the language, especially during the pre-communication period of the lesson.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) resources were used in all classes. Best practice was observed when authentic material, relating to the students' range of interests, was used. When attempting to stimulate students opinions, every effort should be made to create links with their own lives and experiences.
- All teachers have their own rooms which are attractively decorated with reference material and samples of students' work. It was also good that dictionaries and other reference books were available.

- For the most part, it was clear that a good relationship had been established between teachers and their students. In these cases, students' opinions were welcomed frequently and their efforts praised regularly: an approach which gave them added encouragement, especially in the case of students with lower ability. Indeed, it is worth seeking students' opinions in advance of formally undertaking the lesson as it is easier to present a topic if their prior knowledge can be drawn upon.
- Students had a range of tasks completed in their copybooks and they were regularly monitored. It is recommended that a common approach with regard to the correction of work be agreed, especially in the case of providing constructive feedback to students.
- It is commendable that students' oral ability is assessed as part of in-house examinations. It is a very positive development that Junior-Certificate candidates underwent the optional oral examination for the first time this year.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is good provision for Irish on the school timetable.
- It is recommended that the manner in which students are allocated to class groups be reviewed and that the value of implementing a mixed-ability or banding system in different year groups be explored.
- The effort made to extend the department's array of facilities and resources is commended. It is good that Irish-language publications are available in the school library and it would be well worthwhile providing material specifically for teenagers also.
- The importance of continuing professional development is recognised and the commitment of the teachers and the management to improvement was noted.
- Teachers are commended for their considerable work to ensure that Irish has a strong profile in the school. Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities actively support the promotion of Irish in school life in general, most especially through giving those students who do not formally study Irish experience of the language and the culture.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A core part of the department's work is subject-development planning and the diligence which the teachers bring to this collaborative work was noted. The subject plan indicated a balance with regard to discussion on whole-school issues and issues pertaining specifically to the learning and teaching of Irish.
- The Irish plan contains a comprehensive outline of all the work done to develop students competence in Irish. When various schemes of work are being reviewed, it is recommended that they be topic-based and that reference be made to the relevant aspects of grammar.
- It is good that TY students' experience of learning Irish is different from their experience to date. This learning experience would be further enhanced if the components that relate to the Leaving Certificate programme were removed.
- Student attainment in certificate examinations is analysed, a commendable practice. In developing this, it would be expected that a commentary would be provided on what this analysis reveals, especially with regard to participation rates at the varying levels.

- Teachers had prepared well for the lessons observed in that they had planned the sequence of lesson's activities. Planning was more effective in cases where additional resources had been prepared to support learning and teaching. It would be in accordance with best practice for all lessons, even those exploring a literary text, to have a communicative objective.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and Irish 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.