

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

**North Monastery,
North Monastery Road, Cork
Roll Number: 62530F**

Date of inspection: 10 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

Date of inspection	10 May 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 class periods• Review of students' work• Feedback to the principal and to the teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good.
- Irish was to the fore in the classes observed.
- Many students study Irish even though they are entitled to an exemption.
- Teachers display a good understanding of students' needs and are generally open to developments in the areas of teaching, learning and assessment.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that greater use be made of cooperative learning tasks.
 - It is recommended that students' oral abilities be assessed on a regular basis.
 - It is recommended that the manner in which students are allocated to class groups be reviewed.
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INTRODUCTION

The North Monastery is a secondary school under the auspices of ERST. Currently, there are 332 boys enrolled in the school and there is indication that the number of students is increasing. The school provides for the Junior Certificate programme and the Leaving Certificate programme as well as providing the Leaving Certificate Applied programme for a small number of students. The Transition Year (TY) programme is available on an optional basis. The school has DEIS status.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good practice was observed in many classes and, in some cases, examples of excellent practice were observed.
- Irish was to the fore during all lessons in that teachers spoke mainly in Irish to students. It was clear that this was common practice in some classes and in these cases students displayed a good understanding of what the teacher was saying.
- A good number of students made a creditable effort to use whatever Irish they had. It would help students if examples of meta-language were displayed in the classroom.
- In one particular case, significant emphasis was placed on the promotion of communication between the students themselves. As well as motivating students to speak and to listen to each other, they were asked to question and correct their fellow students. This is excellent practice.
- On several occasions, commendable efforts were made to provide students with phrases that they could practice and acquire. It would be worth identifying the most frequently-used phrases and to practice one or two each day so that students would then be able to use newly-learned vocabulary.
- In one lesson, students worked in groups, an activity that they very much enjoyed. They worked cooperatively and a worthwhile learning outcome was evident at the end of the lesson. It is strongly recommended that as many opportunities as possible are used to set students cooperative learning tasks. Teachers are asked to organise these tasks in a manner that ensures equal participation by all students.
- A cooperative atmosphere existed in many of the classes. In such instances it was evident that a good relationship had been fostered between the teachers and most of their students. References to students' own lives were worthwhile, particularly when such references occurred in the form of an open conversation.
- Students' continuous participation was at its best when they were engaged in a range of activities during the lesson. Such engagement was even better when completion of these activities ensured a balance in terms of practicing the four language skills.
- It would be worthwhile for all teachers to use strategies such as role play to create a more cordial atmosphere and to encourage greater communication and cooperative learning amongst students.
- A range of resources were used in some classes. In one case these involved slides and, the use of authentic materials such as these, prompted student interest. In another case, charts and flashcards were used effectively to facilitate spoken and written communication and to reinforce newly-taught aspects of the language.

- Questioning was used to assess learning effectiveness. Those students who made a great effort to provide answers are commended. Teachers should bear in mind the value of allowing time for students to compose answers as well as to consult with each other, if necessary.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The timetable is supportive in that students have regular contact with the target language. However, the class periods appear to be too long and it would be worth considering having nine class periods in a regular school day.
- A rigid streaming system applies in all year groups. The timetable was amended this year so that all Irish classes – amongst other subjects – occur at the same time in most year groups. It is recommended that the opportunity be availed off to establish a banding system. This would indicate to students that teachers have high expectations for them.
- 10% of the entire student cohort has an exemption from the study of Irish in accordance with circular M 10/94. These exemptions pertain mainly to students who received their early education abroad. Those students with special educational needs who are eligible for an exemption but who make an additional effort to learn Irish are particularly commended.
- Teachers have their own classrooms with ICT facilities as well as storage space. It would be worthwhile to display samples of student work in classrooms as well as samples of the meta-language and other reference material.
- Teachers' competence in Irish varied in so far as some teachers were highly competent and in other cases there was room for improvement.
- Apart from house examinations, it is left to individual teachers to assess their students' progress. Individual practices differed but they included the daily checking of homework, class tests and monitoring class work. The main focus is on the assessment of written work and it is strongly recommended that means by which students' oral language could be assessed would be explored.
- Many teachers welcome opportunities to participate in professional development. They are of the opinion that the content of in-service courses for Irish teachers is very helpful. It would be good if opportunities were provided for them to gain insight into strategies such as Assessment for Learning or Cooperative Learning.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Collaborative planning has begun in that common schemes of work have been set out for certain year groups. When the plan is being developed in the future, it is recommended that a brief overview be provided on the manner in which Irish is promoted within the classroom and outside of it.
- The convening of subject-planning meetings presents teachers with an opportunity for cooperative learning. Meetings should, therefore, include discussion about matters specifically pertaining to classroom practice; aspects of practice that are successful as well as challenges that need to be overcome.

- Good planning had taken place for those lessons observed. The majority of teachers had given clear thought to the steps of the lesson. It would be a good idea if the desired learning outcomes were shared with students at the outset of each lesson. Homework could also be assigned at this point.

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 of the school 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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board acknowledges the very positive nature of this report.

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

The recommendations will be addressed at planning meetings.