

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Killarney Community College
Killarney, County Kerry
Roll number: 70450D

Date of inspection: 28 February 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 IRISH IN JUNIOR CYCLE**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	28 February 2012
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 three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good quality teaching and learning was evident in the lessons observed.
- Irish was the principal language used throughout all lessons.
- During lessons specific emphasis is placed on developing students' oral proficiency.
- All students participated readily in lesson activities.
- Class practices are discussed during departmental meetings.
- Schemes of work are set out according to desired learning outcomes. This approach facilitates review of the effectiveness of learning by both teachers and students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that appropriate balance be sought between the use of the direct method of teacher directed learning and the more interactive teaching methods where students have a more central role in the learning process.
 - It is recommended that Irish be more visible on school signage.
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INTRODUCTION

Killarney Community College operates under the management of Kerry Education Service. School enrolments have increased significantly in the past three years and this trend is likely to continue into the future. At the time of the evaluation visit, 311 students were enrolled and there were three teachers of Irish. The school offers the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes and a small number of students take the Junior Certificate Schools Programme (JCSP).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good quality teaching and learning was evident. Examples of good practice were evident in all lessons as well as some areas for development.
- Irish was the principal language in use in all lessons. Student proficiency in spoken Irish was in keeping with their ability in the subject.
- Opportunities to speak Irish were created frequently for students throughout classes. The opportunities created for discussion on everyday life events were particularly worthwhile and it is recommended that this practice be continued.
- Students were regularly set to speak among themselves as part of an interactive task. This good practice should be extended. However, care should be taken to ensure that collaborative learning tasks do not exceed direct teacher instruction which is required to present new aspects of language or explain concepts.
- The way in which students were encouraged to speak and read aloud in class is to be commended. As a means of reducing trepidation among certain students and to encourage their self confidence use could be made of props or costumes.
- Students were regularly set a range of activities which created opportunities to practise the four main language skills.
- Students' accurate pronunciation was noted. Best practice was evident when students repeated the pronunciation and manipulation of the newly acquired language.
- Effective use was made of colourful and authentic resources which stimulated student interest and participation.
- Great care is taken to ensure that students with special educational needs have a worthwhile experience of learning Irish. The needs of students with high ability must be provided for also. Teachers should have high expectations of these students and should include appropriate challenge in the activities and aspects of the language that are practised in class.
- At the beginning of every class the desired learning outcomes were shared with students. Best practice was evident when these objectives were revisited at the end of the lesson so that the outcome of the learning could be reviewed.
- In one case effective use was made of questioning to assess the level of language acquisition. As a result of this strategy students were clear on what progress they had made. It is recommended that questioning by the teacher is integrated into lessons in so far as is possible.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabled provision supports teaching and learning Irish.
- Thirty-four percent of the total student population have an exemption from studying Irish. Fifteen percent of these have learning difficulties and the remainder received their early education abroad. It was stated that these students are encouraged to study Irish. The school also expects that students like these will be enabled to study Irish formally in future through the optional oral examination in the Junior Certificate. Currently, these students are organised so as to ensure that they continue to participate in learning activities when Irish classes are timetabled.
- The method by which students are assigned to class groups facilitates all students to study Irish at the level best suited to them.
- As school enrolments increase it is recommended that every teacher is afforded the opportunity to teach Irish in all programmes and at all levels.
- Promotion of Irish outside the classroom is supported by a programme of extra- and co-curricular activities.
- Teachers are classroom based and this system allows them to create a stimulating learning environment. Students are greatly encouraged to communicate among themselves by having the tables set out as three sides of a rectangle, as was the case in one classroom.
- Commendable efforts are made in the school to make the best possible use of information and communications technology (ITC).
- The school is aware of the benefits to be gained from continuing professional development and the Irish department and the school participate in numerous projects. Currently emphasis is placed on collaborative learning activities, an approach which is very suitable to language classes.
- It is recommended that Irish be more visible throughout the school environs, especially in signage.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject development planning is an integral part of the work of the Irish department in the school. It is evident that detailed discussion takes place on enabling students to become proficient in the target language. The subject department has an open outlook and teachers are eager to try new approaches and assess the benefits to be gained.
- Teachers discuss class practice on a regular basis and, as a department, have approved many good practices and implemented them in the various classes.
- Regional cluster meetings are held every term under the umbrella of the Kerry Education Service. This is a very supportive forum for sharing ideas with teachers from other schools and for designing, discussing and assessing new practices and approaches.
- Schemes of work are very well developed. The schemes are set out in the form of desired learning outcomes, a method which clarifies the progress students make from year to year regarding the acquisition of Irish. This layout facilitates review and self-assessment.

- It is recommended that information regarding the various resources available in the school to support teaching and learning Irish be included in the department plan for Irish.
- In the classes observed it was evident that time and care had been given to planning and class preparation. Consideration had been given to the aspects of the language that students would acquire and to the activities best suited to support the learning process.

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.