

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of
REPORT**

**Marian College
Ballsbridge, Dublin 4
Roll number: 60500J**

Date of inspection: 20th October 2011



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING OF IRISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	20 th October 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and the subject teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and the subject teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and interaction was good in the classes observed.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used during certain lessons and it is recommended that its use be extended to all classes.
- Good teaching methodologies were observed in Irish classes and the lessons were well paced.
- Pair-work was used in certain cases to create opportunities for communication among students, but it is necessary to ensure, however, that real opportunities for communication in the target language are created during pair-work and classroom activities.
- Student behaviour in the classes was very good. They played an active part in the lessons and used the target language when they were able to do so.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that more opportunities for communication in the target language be created for students during the Irish lessons and that the communicative skills of all students be formally assessed.
 - It is recommended that a wider range of teaching aids and resources be used during lessons, to support student learning and to increase their interest in the language.
 - It is recommended that the teachers focus on teaching strategies to support the development of literacy in Irish.
 - It is recommended that wider use be made of ICT during Irish lessons.
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INTRODUCTION

Marian College is a voluntary secondary school for boys. The school offers a wide range of programmes for the students, including the Junior Certificate, Transition Year (TY) and the established Leaving Certificate. Both male and female students can repeat the Leaving Certificate in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and interaction was very good in the classes observed. The majority of teachers made great efforts to avoid the use of translation as far as possible, by using various strategies.
- Some limited use was made of pair-work to create opportunities for communication in one class observed. In general however, not enough opportunities were created for the students to communicate in the target language during Irish lessons and it is recommended that the teachers address this deficiency as a matter of urgency. It is necessary to develop all the language skills, including communication, during the lessons.
- The students answered the teachers' questions enthusiastically, and in some cases teachers required the students to frame their answers as full sentences. This practice should be extended to all classes, to give the students experience of Irish-language syntax and of forming simple sentences correctly.
- Good use was made of ICT in certain classes and its use is highly commended. Apart from ICT, a song, a newspaper supplement *Am Breise* and a class game, scarcely any other resources were used to support student learning and to put the learning of the language in an interesting contemporary context. It is recommended that a wide range of materials be used, including podcasts, music, communications media in both Irish and English, pictures, photographs, magazines and any other materials deemed useful, relevant and attractive.
- In one instance, a contemporary song sung in Irish was played for the students and the choice of music is commended. It is recommended, however, that when music or other supplementary material is used in class, the words in Irish be displayed and the musical context explained, as well as the relationship between it and the subject-matter of the lesson.
- It was felt that a considerable amount of time during Irish classes was spent in copying material from the white board. It is recommended that teachers distribute more notes among the students and use the class-time available more effectively.
- It is recommended that literary material and poetry for TY be carefully selected and from a wider selection than that which is generally covered in the junior cycle.
- An Irish learning environment had been created in the classrooms observed. It is recommended that the material displayed on the walls be more widely referred to during lessons and it is also recommended that material be selected which would support student learning and the development of Irish-language literacy.
- In some cases, mistakes in grammar and phonetics were corrected, but it is necessary to pay more meticulous attention to this aspect of learning the language. Teachers should also watch their own accuracy in the language and the accuracy of written material made available to the students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for Irish on the timetable for senior cycle in the school is quite satisfactory, with three class-periods per week for Transition Year and five class-periods per week each for fifth year and sixth year. All classes in the junior cycle are allocated four class-periods per week; it is recommended that, if possible, an extra class-period per week be made available for at least one of those year-groups in junior cycle.
- Good efforts are made to celebrate *Seachtain na Gaeilge* in the school, by organising a range of enjoyable Irish language events and occasions. During their time at the school, students are brought on various trips with a special focus on Irish language and culture. This work is commended, but the co-curricular and cross-curricular programme could be further developed and some suggestions in this respect were offered to the Irish-teaching staff during the evaluation.
- There are new arrangements in place in the school for conducting formal oral exams for third year and sixth year students twice a year and this is commended. It is important, however, to assess the communicative skills of all the students in the school. It is recommended that this be done from first year right through and that the results of this assessment be communicated to parents as a separate mark in the school reports.
- At present, teachers make requests on an individual basis to purchase resources. Teaching resources for the department of Irish are currently stored in the staffroom and in the classroom of one of the teachers. It is recommended that an inventory of resources be compiled and that the list form part of the plan for teaching and learning the language. To support student learning, the teachers should be always on the alert for new material and resources coming on the market for the teaching of Irish.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A co-ordinator for the subject is nominated from among the teachers of Irish. It was reported that the teachers in the department meet regularly. It is recommended that electronic records of those meetings be kept, giving an account of decisions made and work to be done.
 - During the inspection, a plan was made available for the teaching of Irish, which contained schemes of work for the different levels and year-groups. The work completed to date on planning is commended. It is necessary now to further develop the plan and to compile integrated schemes of work. It is recommended that the revised plan for Irish contain information about the department of Irish, organisational details, as well as schemes of work containing information on topics, teaching methodologies, resources to be used in class, learning targets, assessment methods and approaches to differentiation.
 - Good, comprehensive preparation had been done for all the classes observed. Teachers devised worksheets, notes and some PowerPoint presentations and that work is commended.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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