

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Subject Inspection of Irish  
REPORT**

**Presentation Secondary School  
Waterford  
Roll Number: 64970U**

**Date of inspection: 29 March 2012**



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

**REPORT**  
**ON**  
**THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	29 March 2012
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with the principal and with the subject teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 class-periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to the principal and to the subject teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, teaching and communication was very good in all the classes observed.
- The use of information and communication technology (ICT) in certain lessons observed is commended.
- The work completed to date on planning for the teaching and learning of the language is commended, however this plan should be further developed so that the teachers would derive maximum benefit from it.
- A variety of activities was observed during the lessons, but not enough opportunities were provided for the students to communicate in the target language.
- Appropriate attention was paid to the development of literacy and numeracy in the classes observed.
- The efforts made to celebrate *Seachtain na Gaeilge* and to extend the students' experience of Irish as a living language outside the classroom are commended.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on communication strategies, to encourage students to make greater use of the target language during Irish lessons.
  - It is recommended that the school consider ways of devising a more extensive extra-curricular and cross-curricular programme for Irish.
  - It is recommended that the communicative skills of all students in the school be assessed from first year onwards.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste na Maighdine is a voluntary secondary school for girls, with a current enrolment of 399 students. A wide range of educational programmes is made available in the school, among them being the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JSCP), Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The use of Irish as the language of management, teaching and communication was very good in all the classes observed. Most of the teachers made great efforts to avoid translation from Irish to English. Although the teachers were strictly focused on using the target language themselves, not enough opportunities were created for the students to speak Irish in class. Questioning was regularly used to encourage students to speak and to test their knowledge, a game was used in one case and group-work in another case observed.
- Those examples were not enough, however, to afford the students opportunities to speak and it is necessary to utilise a wider range of strategies to create genuine opportunities for communication in the target language during lessons. Regular use should be made of pair-work, group-work, role-play and open communication, to afford students opportunities to speak Irish. When group-work is undertaken in class, teachers should ensure that the groups are not too big, in order that every member of the group gets a chance to speak.
- In some classes, the objective of the lesson was displayed on the whiteboard for the students: it is recommended that this good practice be extended to all classes. It would also be worthwhile to summarise what was learnt during each lesson, to focus students' attention on their own progress.
- ICT was used in some lessons and its use greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the lessons as well as the benefit and pleasure the students derived from their learning. It is recommended that teachers build on the good work being done in this area at present and that they gradually extend the use of ICT.
- Effective use was made of a podcast in one case observed and this approach is commended as a means of developing students' listening and comprehension skills. It is recommended that teachers identify and source a wider range of aids and resources to use in class, to put the subject-matter of the lessons in context for the students. It would be advisable to make regular use of the media of communication, of video clips, television programmes, photographs, music, posters and any other material that would be attractive and interesting for students.
- In certain classes, repetition was occasionally used to ensure that the students were able to pronounce words and phrases correctly. It is recommended that this good practice be extended to all classes. In certain cases also, extra time should have been given to correcting phonetics and to ensuring that students understood the differences in sound between long and short vowels.
- Great attention was paid to the development of literacy during Irish classes. Effective use was made of key-words in every lesson and, in one case, students were asked to form sentences that indicated the correct use of the key-words they had learnt. Very helpful notes were distributed to the students in certain cases to support their learning and the

teachers' work in this regard is commended. The classrooms were decorated in an effective, stimulating way with samples of students' work and other materials relevant to learning the language. It is recommended that this material be used during lessons and that students' attention be directed to keywords, verbs and phrases displayed, to support their learning.

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

- The provision for Irish on the school timetable is satisfactory, with four class-periods per week available for first years and five per week for second and third-year students. Three class-periods per week are provided for Transition Year and six per week for fifth and sixth-year students.
- Admirable efforts are made to celebrate *Seachtain na Gaeilge* in the school, as well as organising social and sports occasions through the medium of Irish, to give the students experience of Irish as a living language. Some suggestions were offered to the teachers of Irish and to the school management regarding various ways of expanding their co-curricular programme further, to support the teachers' classroom work. Commended also are the efforts made to provide Gaeltacht scholarships for the school. It would be worthwhile to assess the impact of those scholarships on the learning of Irish in general, as well as the value for money derived from them.
- The students take formal oral tests in Transition Year, fifth and sixth year. It is recommended that this good practice be extended to all classes, from first year right through and that the results of that assessment be presented as a separate entity in the reports sent to parents.
- An annual budget is provided for the teachers of Irish and it is intended that a central storage location will be available shortly for the aids and resources of the department of Irish. It is recommended that the teachers compile an inventory of resources and agree a plan for identifying and sourcing teaching aids for the coming five years.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- A co-ordinator is nominated from among the teachers of Irish to assume responsibility for planning and co-ordination in the department of Irish. This responsibility is rotated among the teachers and a range of duties is attached to the position.
- The teachers hold a meeting once a month specifically to discuss issues concerning the teaching of Irish. Very precise minutes, mainly in Irish, were made available during the inspection; these indicated that the teachers discuss a wide range of issues and that there is a reflective culture among the staff.
- A plan for the teaching of Irish was made available during the inspection. It was evident that a great deal of time and trouble had been invested in it and the teachers are commended for this commitment. When the plan is being reviewed later on, it would be worthwhile to set it out in a more integrated way. It is recommended that the revised version include topics, teaching methodologies, learning targets, resources, as well as assessment methods to measure student progress.
- Admirable efforts are made to increase the number of students who take higher-level Irish papers in the state exams. It is recommended that realistic measurable targets be set as part of the DEIS planning and that the teachers continue their efforts to increase,

gradually, the number of students taking higher level. The recommendations made in this report should help to achieve that objective.

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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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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