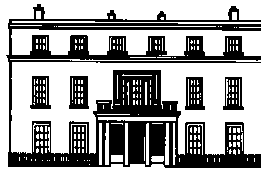


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Bridgetown Vocational College
Bridgetown
County Wexford
Roll number: 71610E**

Date of inspection: 19 November 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	19 November 2013
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and subject teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during five class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and subject teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of the teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to good, with some scope for improvement in various aspects of the teaching.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was good on the whole in the lessons observed, but in certain cases translation from Irish to English was overused.
- In some lessons plenty of communicative situations were created to provide opportunities for the students to communicate in the target language, but this practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Insufficient use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to support student learning and to enhance the variety of resources used during lessons.
- The teachers' interest in and enthusiasm for the teaching of Irish is commended, as is the work undertaken on organising an extra-curricular and cross-curricular programme during the year, to enhance student interest in learning the language.
- The analysis done on the results of state examinations is impressive, as are the strategies employed to increase the number of students taking the state examinations at higher level and at ordinary level.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers ensure that effective communicative opportunities are made available during all lessons, so that students can practise their Irish in an authentic context, according to their abilities.
 - It is necessary to use a wider range of teaching resources, ICT resources included, in teaching Irish to support student learning.
 - It is recommended that students' communicative skills be assessed from first year onwards, so that the students themselves and their parents are aware of the importance of this aspect of learning the language.
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INTRODUCTION

Bridgetown Vocational College is a co-educational post primary school under the aegis of the Wexford and Waterford Education and Training Board, with a current enrolment of 597 students. The school provides a wide range of educational programmes including the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Applied programme (LCA) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Some Post-Leaving Certificate courses are also provided.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of the teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to good, with some scope for improvement in certain aspects of the teaching.
- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and interaction was good on the whole, but in certain cases translation from Irish to English was overused. It is recommended that the department of Irish agree a policy in relation to this and that strategies be devised to ensure that students understand the subject-matter of the lesson without continuously resorting to translation.
- Some teachers made great efforts to create communicative opportunities for the students through the use of pair-work, group-work and games. While these strategies are highly commended, it is necessary to ensure that authentic communicative opportunities arise from them and that chances are created for the students to speak the language naturally, according to their abilities. In some classes, the only opportunity students had to speak Irish was when answering the teacher's questions.
- In one case observed, very good efforts were made to teach all four language-skills within a single class-period. There was a range of activities employed in the class and the students were given an opportunity to practise all the language-skills. This approach is highly commended and should be extended to all of the Irish classes.
- In certain cases observed, the learning objectives were shared with the students and it is recommended that this good practice be extended to all lessons and that the objectives be revisited at the end of each lesson, as a means of reviewing student learning.
- The teachers were enthusiastic and energetic in conducting the classes observed. Mutual respect between students and teachers was evident and discipline was excellent.
- ICT was little used in the lessons observed and where it was used the material was quite basic. The use of ICT and a wider-range of resources would greatly enhance student learning and it is recommended that teachers focus attention urgently on this weakness. In some cases there was a problem with the ICT equipment in the classrooms and it is recommended that school management address this. A considerable amount of time was spent in some lessons recording material on the whiteboard during lessons; the use of ICT would help to reduce this time.
- Use could be made of visual learning aids, photographs, pictures and other materials to support student learning and to enhance their understanding of the subject-matter of the lesson.
- In one class observed, the layout of the classroom had been changed to facilitate group-work. This layout succeeded very well and it greatly enhanced the effectiveness of the teaching and learning. It is recommended that teachers consider changing the classroom layout from time to time, in order to find the arrangement that best facilitates and encourages students' participation in their learning.
- On the whole, the classrooms were very pleasantly decorated with students' work and other materials to support learning. It is recommended that regular reference be made to this

material during lessons and that it be used to support the development of students' literacy and numeracy skills.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for Irish on the school timetable is quite satisfactory, with 5 class-periods per week available for all yeargroups in the school apart from the students taking the LCA, for whom three class periods are provided in the first year of that course.
- A great effort is made in the school to broaden and develop students' experience of Irish as a living language, through participation in various competitions involving the language, Irish cultural events in the school and celebration of *Seachtain na Gaeilge*. The work done by the teachers in this regard is highly commended because such activities enhance students' understanding of the importance of the language and support the students' classroom learning.
- Fifth and sixth-year students take oral exams as part of the assessment system for Irish. It is recommended that teachers further develop this work by assessing students' communicative skills on a formal basis from first year right through. The results of this assessment should be shown as a separate item in the reports sent to parents.
- The teachers of Irish have begun to assemble a resource centre and it is recommended that this project be completed as soon as possible, to help teachers to use a wider range of resources in their lessons.
- The school management supports the continuing professional development of teachers and all teachers of Irish have attended the in-service courses organised by the Second Level Support Service for Irish, in recent years.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- One of the teachers of Irish is nominated as co-ordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of the language and this responsibility is passed to another member of staff after the co-ordinator has served about a year in office.
- Meetings are held once a term and minutes of those meetings are kept. The minutes indicate that a comprehensive analysis of the results of the state examinations had been carried out and this work is commended.
- On the day of the evaluation, a plan was made available for the teaching and learning of Irish. Although the plan contained a good account of all the school factors affecting the teaching and learning of the language in the school, schemes of work did not form part of the plan. It is recommended that schemes of work be compiled which would include the following elements in an integrated form: topics or themes, teaching methodologies, teaching resources including ICT, learning objectives and assessment methods.
- First-year students are in mixed-ability classes, apart from the group following the JCSP. The teachers of Irish are endeavouring to increase the number of students taking the higher-level course for the Junior Certificate. Two of the five second-year classes are attempting the higher level this year, for the first time. In the case of all the other year groups, there is just one higher-level class and three or four ordinary-level classes. The number of students in the higher-level class at senior cycle has increased in recent years and the teachers' work in this regard is highly recommended.

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.

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