

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Presentation Secondary School
Loughboy, Kilkenny

Roll number: 61590S

Date of inspection: 28 January 2016



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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	28 January 2016
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 5 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from very good in the majority of lessons to good in a minority, with scope for development in one lesson.
- The use of Irish as the language of instruction, management and communication by teachers was very good and appropriate emphasis was placed on speaking the language during lessons.
- Good, effective use was made of information and communications technology (ICT) in a small number of lessons observed.
- A wide range of methodologies and approaches was used in the lessons observed, including working in pairs and in groups.
- The teachers' efforts in providing pupils with co-curricular and extra-curricular events to expand and develop their experience of Irish as a living language are commendable, particularly the school's participation in the Gaelbhreach awards scheme.
- Good, comprehensive planning was undertaken for all lessons observed and learning was therefore well-paced.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The use of ICT and development of effective ICT resources should be progressed in order to place the teaching of Irish in a modern context for pupils.
- Differentiation in teaching methods and in classroom tasks and homework set for students who received their primary education through Irish, and for those with a high standard of Irish, should be included in the department's planning process.
- The plan for the teaching and learning of Irish should be used as a working document among teachers to guide their work from year to year.

INTRODUCTION

Meánscoil na Toirbhirte, Loch Buí is a girls' secondary school with a current enrolment of 719 pupils. The Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate are provided for students. 62 students (8.6%) are currently exempt from studying Irish.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from very good in the majority of lessons to good in a minority, with scope for development in one lesson.
- The use of Irish as the language of instruction, communication and management by teachers observed during the inspection, was very good. Appropriate emphasis was placed on spoken Irish through a variety of activities and methodologies. Extensive use was made of working in pairs and in groups to facilitate and foster communication in the target language among students.
- A range of methodologies was used during lessons, a practice that ensured that students had the opportunity to practice all language skills during classes. This approach is highly commended.
- Many students had a good standard of Irish and clearly enjoyed using the language during lessons. Opportunities for speaking Irish in the school should be increased as much as possible. Existing school activities such as Irish language debates and conversation circles should assist in achieving this aim.
- Learning intentions were shared with students at the start of all lessons observed. The practice observed in some cases, in which learning intentions were expressed in terms of what students would be able to do as a result of their learning, is highly commended. Learning intentions were reviewed in some lessons, another commendable practice.
- Effective use was made of high quality ICT in some cases observed and the use of this highly valuable resource is commended. Use was also made of rather basic and childish ICT material in a few cases observed and it should be ensured that whatever ICT resources are used in future are stimulating, relevant, contemporary and attractive to students. The effective use of ICT would have greatly enhanced some of the lessons observed.
- The layout of certain classrooms which facilitated active and cooperative learning is commended. Some classrooms were effectively decorated with a range of materials relating to the teaching and learning of the language and with students' artwork. Wall displays of material to develop pupils' literacy and numeracy skills during lessons should be used more widely.
- Good, comprehensive planning was undertaken for all lessons observed and learning was therefore well paced. A respectful learning atmosphere was observed in all classrooms and the good relationship between students and teachers was apparent.
- Valuable efforts were made to enrich and expand students' Irish in one lesson observed and this approach is commended. Students were asked to answer the teachers' questions using complete sentences in some cases observed, a commendable approach, this good practice was missing in other lessons however, where single word answers were accepted from students. It is essential that students gain experience in constructing complete

sentences in Irish from first year onwards, no matter how simple the sentences are initially.

- It was clear that homework is regularly given and corrected. The copybooks observed were full of work and careful corrections were visible, with comprehensive guidance for students to improve.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for Irish on the timetable is satisfactory with five periods per week provided for first and second years, four periods in third year and in Transition Year. Fifth years have five periods per week and sixth years have six periods, including one double period. The additional support given to the teaching of Irish through the provision of a sixth period in sixth year is highly commended.
- Useful efforts are made by the school to organise co-curricular and extra-curricular events, including events during Seachtain na Gaeilge, conversation circles, trips to the Gaeltacht and debates in Irish. The school's decision to participate in the Gaelbhreach awards scheme is highly commended. This will ensure a positive influence on the profile of Irish in the school and help in fostering a positive attitude towards the language in general among staff and students. Additional events and competitions could be investigated to further support the opportunities for students to use Irish.
- All Irish teachers attended the in-service courses organised by the Second Level Support Service for Irish and evidence of the various recommendations of that service were apparent in the wide range of methodologies used during lessons.
- All students in the school, from first year onwards, undergo oral examinations. This is commendably good practice. This practice could be greatly enhanced by showing the results of these oral examinations as a separate mark in school reports sent to parents.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers are nominated in turn for the position of co-ordinator for planning for the teaching and learning of Irish. Teachers hold regular meetings throughout the year, formally and informally. Minutes from these meetings are available.
- A plan for teaching and learning of Irish was made available on the day of the inspection. It was clear that substantial work was put into the planning work and this is highly commended. That said, more detail should be included regarding the good practices in place in the school in relation to the use of the target language and methodologies. The plan for the teaching and learning of Irish should be used as a working document among teachers to guide their work from year to year.
- As a percentage of students come to the school from an all-Irish primary school background, department planning should take cognisance of meeting the learning requirements of these students and of any other students with a high standard in the language, on a differentiated basis.
- A high percentage of students take higher-level Irish in the state examinations and the work of teachers in persuading and encouraging students to remain at higher level is commended. Attainment in state examinations is very good.

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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

Published June 2016