

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Subject Inspection of: Irish
REPORT**

**Ardgillan Community College
[Coláiste Pobail Ard Giolláin]
Balbriggan, County Dublin
Roll Number: 76129H**

Date of inspection: 21 October 2015



**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	20, 21 October 2015
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and teachers• Contact with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods• Review of students' work• Feedback for the principal, deputy principal and subject coordinator

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good teaching methods were a feature of all of the lessons observed and the target language predominated in line with good practice.
- The quality of learning was good in the case of written work; there was scope to develop the speaking of the language among the students.
- There was a visibly good atmosphere between the students and the teachers in the lessons observed and the students fully cooperated and worked diligently.
- The quality of provision for Irish language on the school timetable was excellent in both the junior cycle and the senior cycle.
- A culture of reflective practitioners is being developed in the Irish department through peer observation which is taking place among the teachers and with teachers of other subjects.
- The Irish department plan and the comprehensive schemes of work which were laid out clearly for every year group and for every level were of high quality.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended to focus more on practising and developing the students' capacity to speak the language.
- It is recommended that greater use be made of information and communication technology (ICT) resources so that the students can hear the language being spoken naturally by other people apart from the teacher in the class.
- There was scope in the lessons to spend more time on reading aloud and on practising and improving the students' capacity to pronounce words.

INTRODUCTION

Ardgillan Community College is a co-educational, multi-denominational school which operates under the patronage of Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board. Opened in 2009, the first cohort of students sat the Leaving Certificate in 2015. The programmes provided are the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year and the established Leaving Certificate. 714 students are enrolled for the current 2015/16 school year.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good teaching methods were a feature of all of the lessons observed and the target language predominated in line with good practice.
- The quality of learning was good in the case of written work; there was scope to develop the speaking of the language among the students in most of the lessons. It is recommended to focus more on practising the students' capacity to speak the language; there is time to do this in view of the positive time allocation for Irish.
- A stimulating environment was provided for the subject both inside and outside the classrooms and the rooms themselves were bright and welcoming.
- ICT resources were used routinely in all the lessons. They were used very effectively in certain instances. The high quality photographs and maps which were used added greatly to understanding the text. Sound recordings were used as a guide for the students to read the text accurately. In general, however, ICT resources were useful rather than effective in the lessons.
- There are many possibilities in using ICT to provide authentic texts in the subject; these opportunities should be availed of. It is important that students hear the language being spoken naturally by other people besides the teacher in the class.
- All of the lessons had clear aims and appropriate learning objectives were set. It would be worth checking the students' understanding of the learning objectives and better still that the students be able to express these in their own words.
- It is worth beginning with finding out and affirming what the students already know about the topic being discussed. Such affirmation builds self-confidence and the desire of the students to take the next step in learning.
- There was scope in the lessons to spend more time on reading aloud and on practising and improving the students' pronunciation. Sometimes, a greater challenge needed to be presented to the students.
- Great commitment and energy were features of the teaching observed, the teachers went to great efforts to explain almost every word. The students did not ask many questions however and there is much scope to develop this skill with them. In order to do this, students need to have the appropriate vocabulary to ask questions.
- Very close attention was paid to aligning the Irish department's literacy goals to the development of English literacy across the school generally. Some of the Irish 'keywords of the day' on display in the rooms alongside the English words were very challenging (*cothaigh/foster; breithniúchán/deliberation; iarchur/deferment; ilchumas/versatility*). These words would be better situated in context rather than encountered randomly.

- Appropriate work was noted in the sample of copybooks that was examined and formative corrections were evident in written teacher comments as well as praise and encouragement for the students' efforts.
- There was a visibly good atmosphere between students and teachers in all of the lessons and the students cooperated fully with teacher directions and gave their best efforts.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Irish has a strong status in the school; the quality of provision for the subject on the timetable is excellent in both the junior cycle and the senior cycle.
- It is a very good initiative to have almost all of the Irish teachers' classrooms clustered together on the same floor. This arrangement increases students' exposure to hearing Irish spoken routinely in this discrete 'Gaeltacht' area in the school.
- There are ambitious targets set for Irish which are commendable. The school is managing to encourage as many students as possible to study Irish at the highest level consistent with their ability. This is true in the junior cycle especially where, for the past three years, the vast majority of students have studied higher level and no student has taken foundation level.
- It is commendable that co-curricular events are being provided for students in the subject, for example: the school's debating team in the Gael Linn competition, a common room during lunchtime once a week, drama production workshops in transition year and there are plans to include Irish language reading material in the library which is being developed.
- All of the Irish teachers are appropriately qualified in the subject and they all have equal experience in teaching higher level.
- School management strongly supports continuing professional development in the subject and the Irish department members have a high attendance at professional courses in the subject provided by the support service nationally.
- There was evidence that there is a culture of developing reflective practitioners in the school. This was apparent in the written records of peer observation of each other's practice in the classroom among the Irish teachers and with teachers of other subjects.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The Irish department plan, and the comprehensive schemes of work that are clearly set out for each year group and for each level, were of high quality. Common schemes of work and common tests were being used.
- It is recommended to include practising free conversation more often in the planning and to include stimulating resources from the media.
- The importance of spoken Irish is recognised in the assessment system. It is a positive step that all of the students are entered for the Junior Certificate optional oral Irish examination. Every student has at least one oral examination every year during the in-house exams. It is recommended to indicate the students' aptitude in spoken Irish separately in school reports.

- The in-depth analysis undertaken of student attainment in the subject in the certificate examinations was valuable. It is recommended that strategies be formulated to set out targets for improvement which are specific, measurable, agreed, realistic and timebound (SMART).
- It is a positive indicator that the subject plan is informed by a self-assessment approach. There is valuable material as well as clear strategies in the subject plan for literacy in 2015/16 under the heading '*What can we do better?*'

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principal and subject coordinator 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.