An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT

Duiske College
Graiguenamanagh, County Kilkenny
Roll Number: 70590T

Date of inspection: 24 February 2016

REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN IRISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	24 February 2016
Inspection activities undertaken • Review of relevant documents • Discussion with principal and teachers • Interaction with students	• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 class periods • Examination of students' work • Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from very good in one lesson observed to good in the majority of lessons with scope for development in relation to another lesson.
- The use of Irish in teaching, management and interaction was very good in the classes observed and worthwhile efforts were also made to encourage students to speak the language.
- Pair work and group work were used effectively in some lessons to ensure opportunities for students to communicate in the target language, an approach that is very commendable.
- Comprehensive preparation was in place for all lessons that were observed, ensuring that the work was well paced.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used to a limited extent in some cases and the use of this valuable resource to stimulate and consolidate student interest in the content of the lesson is commended.
- The school's senior management is very supportive of Irish in the school and has an understanding of the importance of the language in the life of the school.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that opportunities be provided in all lessons for students to communicate in the target language.
- It is recommended that greater use be made of ICT to support students' learning and that the variety and complexity of the content be further extended.
- It is recommended that more emphasis be placed on differentiated work during lessons so as to cater for the learning needs of all students.
- Although significant work has been done over the years on planning for the teaching and learning of Irish, further development on some details of the plan would greatly enhance the effectiveness of that planning, particularly in regard to planning for Irish in Transition Year.

INTRODUCTION

Duiske College is a co-educational post-primary school under the patronage of Carlow and Kilkenny Education and Training Board. The school is situated in a small rural town and it has a current enrolment of 133 students. The number of students in the school is gradually increasing. The school provides the following programmes: the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme, Transition Year, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate. Duiske College also provides two post-Leaving Certificate courses.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The standard of teaching and learning ranged from very good in one lesson observed to good in the majority of lessons with scope for development in relation to another lesson.
- The use of Irish as the language of instruction, management and interaction was very good in the classes observed. The commitment of teachers to using the target language and to encouraging students to do their best to speak Irish is commendable.
- Pair work and group work were used, on the whole, to ensure opportunities for students to communicate, an approach that is very commendable. It must, however, be ensured that opportunities to communicate are provided in all lessons and that each student is appropriately challenged.
- The way in which all language skills were practised in a few of the observed lessons is commendable. Complete sentences were sought in answer to questions rather than accepting one word answers, an approach that is commendable. However, more emphasis is required on repetition to ensure that students can correctly pronounce new words and phrases. It is more likely that they will attempt new words if they are confident that they can pronounce them correctly.
- Students were made aware of the learning intentions at the beginning of some lessons. It is recommended that this good practice be extended and that the intentions are always displayed in terms of what students will be able to do as an outcome of their learning. It would also be worth reviewing successful learning at the end of the lesson.
- Comprehensive preparation was in place for all lessons and it was evident that diligence and work pertained to lesson material that had been prepared in advance. It is recommended, however, that there is differentiation in the prepared questions so that the questions cater for all ability ranges and competency levels in Irish.
- ICT was used to a limited extent during a few lessons. The use of ICT is commended but the use of this valuable resource needs to be extended further to support students' interest in the content of the lesson and their learning. Content of high quality should be used and this content should interest the students.
- In another lesson, a short film was shown and it is commendable that worksheets based on the film were distributed during the viewing of the film. However, it would be worth including some questions and additional prompts on the whiteboard, rather than having too much talk from the teacher during the film. It is also recommended that it be ensured that the volume is at an appropriate level rather than having it too high or too low.
- A lot of work had been completed in the copybooks that were examined; work that had been carefully corrected with good guidance for improvement provided. The diligence of teachers in this regard is commendable. It was observed that there was quite a lot of translation from

Irish to English included in the written tasks. Such practice should be avoided as it engenders poor practice amongst students of depending on translation rather than depending on their own learning.

- Students were given a lot of praise and encouragement while they were learning. There was a supportive and respectful atmosphere in all lessons. In a few instances, the layout of the classroom helped to facilitate and promote co-operative learning.
- The classroom walls were decorated with material related to the teaching and learning of the language. Although some of the material was used during the lesson, greater use could be made of this to support students' learning, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for Irish in the timetable is satisfactory with five periods a week for first years, four periods for second and third years and three periods for Transition Year. Five periods a week are available for all classes in fifth and sixth year.
- The school's senior management is extremely supportive of Irish and understands the importance of Irish in the life of the school.
- Worthwhile efforts are made to raise the profile of the language in the school and to extend the students' experience of Irish as a living language outside the classroom. Students are brought on trips to the Gaeltacht and Seachtain na Gaeilge is celebrated with a range of events. This work could be further developed and it is recommended that suggestions be sought from the student council and from members of staff regarding the means by which students' interest in learning the language might be enhanced.
- Most classes are taught in mixed-ability settings and this presents challenges for teachers. There are creditable efforts made in Duiske College to cater for those students who wish to study higher-level Irish by providing extra classes for them. The diligence of teachers and management in this regard is commendable.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Since Duiske College is a very small school the Irish staff is also quite small and some staff changes have occurred in recent months. Nevertheless, one of the teachers is nominated as coordinator for the teaching and learning of Irish.
- Planning documents were made available during the inspection and it was evident that time and effort was spent on planning over the years. Some documentation that is now outdated needs to be re-organised.
- It is recommended that a specific plan be outlined for Transition Year, enabling the teacher to follow an interesting programme from week to week with an appropriate emphasis on the development of communicative skills. The literature and poetry content for the Leaving Certificate should be avoided. Transition Year provides scope for teachers to create an alternative and appealing programme providing students with opportunities for learning in different ways. This opportunity should be appropriately availed of in regard to the teaching of Irish.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and with the subject teacher 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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