

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Coláiste Chríost Rí
Capwell Road, Cork City
Roll number: 625600**

Date of inspection: 04 October 2012



**A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S**

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	4 & 5 October 2012.
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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was good. Of particular note was the excellent practice observed in one lesson and the very good practice in another two lessons.
- In the majority of lessons observed, Irish was predominantly spoken. Students' high levels of oral proficiency were noted.
- Many of the teachers displayed a high expectations of their students.
- Irish enjoys a high status in the school.
- Members of the Irish department have given comprehensive consideration to the most effective method of delivering the syllabuses of the different programmes to their learners.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the department members would engage in professional collaborative review, as part of a self-evaluation process, so that every member of the department would have exposure to the good practice used in the different classes.
 - It is recommended that teachers attend the training workshops organised for teachers of Irish at second level.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Chríost Rí, an all-boys' voluntary secondary school, operates under the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers School Trust (PBST). At the time of the evaluation visit a total of 636 students were enrolled and there were six teachers involved in the teaching of Irish. The Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes are provided and the Transition Year (TY) is offered as an optional programme in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Six Irish lessons were observed and in the vast majority of these lessons the quality of teaching and learning was either good or very good. Excellent practice was observed in one lesson.
- Irish was the principal language in use in all the lessons observed. Best practice was evident where students were accustomed to communicating with the teacher and with each other in Irish. Consequently, in many cases students' oral proficiency was in keeping with their ability level in the subject.
- Learning outcomes of class work were worthwhile when students used recently-taught aspects of the language by reading a passage; listening to a segment or formulating sentences, either written or orally. Practice was further enhanced when learning was consolidated by providing students with opportunity to practise the four language skills.
- Some teachers placed particular emphasis on enriching the quality of Irish used through practising common expressions with their students. The use of such expressions greatly enhanced the quality of students' spoken Irish.
- In the vast majority of classes, students were set a wide range of activities so that they could practise the different language skills. Furthermore, students' continuing participation was promoted during these activities. When teachers are designing learning activities in the future, it is recommended that further use is made of activities where students have to pose, as well as answer, questions.
- In some lessons, teachers did their utmost to present lesson content in a clear intelligible manner. In addition, these teachers provided students with strategies and clues that would help them to remember this information, as and when necessary.
- In one case, it was noted that not enough support was given to students while new aspects of the language were being presented. In this particular case, there was a need for further consolidation of the newly-taught language by getting students involved in additional learning activities where they could practise the work they had covered orally.
- Very good practice was observed when students had to refer to their dictionaries and to prior learning noted in their copybooks. This approach indicates that teachers recognise the benefit to be gained from independent learning and they expect students to take responsibility for their own learning.
- Additional indication of independent learning being developed was the references made to points of grammar as they arose. In these cases, it was evident that students were familiar with paying attention to accuracy of Irish and they immediately accepted this extra element of class work.
- A number of strategies were used to create a positive collaborative atmosphere during lessons. Students were encouraged to express opinions; regular reference was made to

their own life and interests and their work was frequently praised. Many teachers had high expectations of their students, an approach which promoted student confidence and motivated them to work.

- Oral questioning was the most common means used to assess the quality of learning. Best practice was evident when a combination of lower and higher order questions was used. In addition, the standard of answers was higher when students were given sufficient time to recall learning, formulate and provide an answer in Irish. As questioning strategies are further developed, it is recommended that when students are composing answers, they are given opportunity to consult and collaborate, as is necessary.
- A small number of teachers used the opportunity to assess individual student's progress by monitoring them as they worked in groups or individually. This was particularly useful as teachers were enabled to respond to the needs of individual students.
- It would be worthwhile to make more extensive use of peer assessment and correction activities, which require students to think about the criteria for success.
- Samples of students' written work were examined. Very many of these copybooks were well maintained and it was evident that quite a few teachers had designed a system for note taking. A satisfactory amount of written tasks had been completed considering the time of year; and this work had been monitored on a regular basis.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Irish enjoys a high status in the school. The fact that Irish is visible and audible in the school environs is a good measure of how well-disposed the school community is to the language. Reflecting the central role of Irish in the school, there are very few students who do not pursue the formal study of Irish.
- Students' interest is given priority when decisions concerning the provision of Irish are being made. Students have regular contact with the target language. Students are assigned to classes in such a way that all students have opportunity to study Irish at the level most appropriate to their ability.
- The flexibility displayed in implementing the syllabuses was noted. For example, team teaching has been trialled and, in the current year, the TY programme was modular with each teacher taking responsibility for the design and delivery of a module each.
- Numerous extra-curricular and co-curricular activities support and promote Irish outside the classroom.
- The assessment system includes the four language skills and ensures that all participants are informed of student progress.
- All teachers are classroom based with access to modern facilities. Charts are displayed in all classrooms and in some cases a commendable effort has been made to create a very attractive environment by displaying, among other items, examples of students' work.
- It is recommended that a professional collaborative review initiative is established so that teachers can observe each other's practice. Such a system could form part of the department's self-evaluation process.

- It is a disadvantage that not all teachers have regularly attended training workshops organised for second level teachers of Irish. It is strongly recommended that every teacher attends these workshops.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject development planning is an integral part of the work of the Irish department. The subject plan for Irish provides a good insight into the department's philosophy with regard to teaching and learning Irish. It is evident from the subject plan that members of the Irish department have a very clear understanding of the most appropriate teaching, learning and assessment processes to facilitate the language acquisition process.
- It would be beneficial to have minutes of department meetings contained in one folder with the subject plan, and laid out so as to illustrate the decisions taken and the actions proposed at every meeting.
- In the lessons observed comprehensive planning had been completed by the vast majority of teachers. In these cases, it was evident that teachers had reflected on the aspects of language to be acquired by students, on the best way in which to present exemplars of this language to students, and on further activities to consolidate learning.
- Very many teachers had prepared stimulating resources to support the teaching and learning process.

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