

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Seamount College,
Kinvara, Co. Galway
Roll number: 63050T**

Date of inspection: 23 May 2011



**AN ROINN DEPARTMENT
OIDEACHAIS OF EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA AND SKILLS**

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	23 May 2011
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with the principal and teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during two class-periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to the principal and to the teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Good approaches to teaching and learning were in use in all lessons observed.
- Good methods have been developed for formative and summative assessment, as well as systematic correction practices.
- The provision for Irish on the timetable is satisfactory.
- The work of the department included good planning techniques for the teaching and learning of Irish.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A record should be kept of the paperwork pertaining to the exemption of students from learning Irish according to the provisions of Circular M10/94.
- It would be helpful if the four main language-skills formed part of the learners' assessment experience from first year through to Leaving Certificate year.
- It would be worth while to use the integrated approach, applied on a thematic basis, as a guide to all the curriculum plans, in accordance with the key principles of the Irish syllabuses.

INTRODUCTION

Seamount Secondary School is a mixed school with an enrolment of 254 students for the current school year. Irish is one of the core subjects for Transition Year (TY), a programme which is compulsory in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Good teaching and learning techniques were used in all lessons observed during the inspection.
- The language was being taught in an integrated way according to appropriate themes, there was a good balance between teacher input and student activities, good links were forged with students' prior learning and a variety of differentiated questions enhanced student participation in the classes according to their ability.
- It would greatly enhance the teaching of new language skills if preparatory work was carried out on the text beforehand. When the students are involved in pair work, the teacher should attend to the learning needs of the pairs and allocate a certain amount of time to feedback from the various pairs.
- The teachers showed very good classroom management skills and an atmosphere of diligence and co-operation characterised all lessons.
- Good practice regarding the use of the target language was evident in all the lessons. Irish was used as the normal language of communication in every class. Points of grammar were woven into the lessons. The students themselves had good Irish and were accustomed to using Irish during lessons. This approach is much more effective than the over-use of the translation method seen in some student folders and text books.
- It is recommended that the department agree a percentage to be allocated to student participation in the use of the target language during lessons on a continuous basis and that this mark be shown in the school reports that issue to homes.
- Good systems are used for formative assessment, monthly tests included. The random sample of homework diaries examined indicated that homework is regularly set. The task set for homework was frequently recorded in Irish. Instead of constantly focusing tasks on written work and memorisation it is recommended that students' competence in all the language skills be developed in their homework tasks.
- There was plenty of work to be seen in the folders and copybooks randomly gathered, and there was a developmental order in this work, as is appropriate. There were good mechanical corrections in the students' work, as well as examples of assessment for learning. It is recommended that the department of Irish discuss the learning-value of the corrections for the student and devise strategies to enhance their ownership of the process.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE-SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is a satisfactory provision for Irish in the timetable, in regards to the number and distribution of class-periods and the arrangements for concurrent timetabling. It would be better to avoid double classes in the senior cycle, to ensure that the students have daily contact with the language.
- Six per cent of the total enrolment of students have been given an exemption by the school from the study of Irish according to the provisions of Circular M10/94. The paperwork relating to these exemptions was not available at the time of the inspection. This must be reviewed. It is commended that an initial step has been taken to redress this by including a question about an exemption from Irish in the school's application form for the coming year.
- All the staff members teaching Irish in the school are graduates in Irish and all teachers get an opportunity of teaching in both cycles, at the various examination levels and all programmes.
- A good programme of continuous professional development (CPD) has been provided at all levels in the school. It is praiseworthy that a survey has been done recently on staff training needs regarding the use of information and communication technology (ICT) and that a plan has been formulated to fill the needs identified in this enquiry. Every opportunity is afforded to all the teachers to attend external courses run by the Second Level Support Services (SLSS) for Irish.
- There are good ICT facilities in the school and every room in the school will have a computer and data projector from September of the coming school -year onwards.
- A good number of sources is used to develop supportive resources for the teaching and learning of Irish. There is a library in the school where these resources are stored.
- The classrooms are used on a student basis. Although materials are displayed in the rooms, there is scope for developing the learning environment in the classrooms in which Irish is taught.
- It is praiseworthy that there are a number of notices in Irish on view throughout the school. It would considerably enhance the students' experience of the language if there were more notices in Irish on permanent display in the school environment.
- All students in the school are comprehensively assessed twice during each school year. It would be beneficial to incorporate the four language skills into the assessment experience of the learners from first year through to leaving certificate.
- A general analysis is conducted of the results obtained by the students in the certificate examinations. It would be more helpful if the department of Irish compared this analysis to the mean national results on an annual basis.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Satisfactory formal structures exist for the department of Irish.
- Good progress has been made by the department in the planning process and monthly plans have been developed for delivery of the syllabus to every year-group. There is provision in many of the plans for teaching the language in a thematic integrated way, in accordance with

the key principles of the syllabuses. The plans are set out according to topic, teaching and learning methodologies, teaching and assessment resources. It is recommended that this approach be extended to all the department's plans.

- Good work has been done in the plan for TY to provide a different teaching and learning experience for the students during that year. It was reported that it was difficult to provide a monthly plan for TY students. It is recommended that this be reviewed as activities on the TY calendar should not influence the teaching and learning of Irish, or any other part of the planned programme.
- It is recommended that a plan of action be agreed, based on the department's own common priorities and on the main recommendations of this report. This would provide a more definite framework for the strategic development of Irish in the school.
- A good standard of planning and preparation had carried out for all classes. It would be beneficial to build on this good work by differentiating the learning outcomes for lessons and choosing a certain number of learning targets suitable for the length of lessons.

At the conclusion of the evaluation, the draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and with the subject teachers. 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.