

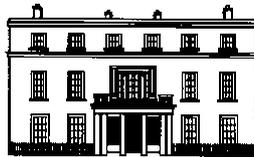
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of Irish
REPORT**

**Stratford College
Rathgar, Dublin 6
Roll number: 61020A**

Date of inspection: 19 May 2011



**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	19 May 2011
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 4 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to Principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was very good in the majority of classes observed.
- The emphasis placed on active learning through the use of games, pair work and group work is commended.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was employed in some of the lessons as a support for the students' learning.
- The extra-curricular and co-curricular programmes implemented as supports for the teaching of Irish are commended.
- The ICT equipment available in the school, and the various internet and information services made available through the school library, are praiseworthy.
- The work completed to date on planning, and particularly on work schemes, is commended.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the effectiveness of the strategies for cultivating the communication skills of students during lessons should be regularly reviewed.
 - It is recommended that a wider range of materials and resources should be utilised, in support of the learning of the language during lessons.
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INTRODUCTION

Stratford College is a private, co-educational school under the patronage of the Jewish Community in Ireland. There are 106 students enrolled at present but school management anticipates further development in the future. Irish is taught to mixed ability classes in first year, second year and Transition Year (TY). The students are divided into higher level and ordinary level classes in the remaining year groups. The board of management was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the inspection; the response of the board will be found in the appendix to this report.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The use of Irish as the language of management, instruction and communication was very good in the majority of classes. Translation from Irish to English was used in one instance and it is recommended that this practice should be avoided, through the use of alternative strategies to ensure that the students understand the subject matter of the lesson.
- Various strategies were implemented in order to encourage students to speak the target language and to encourage them to participate and be active in their own learning. Games, pair work and group work were utilised. It is recommended that the effectiveness of this work be reviewed regularly, so as to ensure that it brings about true communication in the target language.
- The use made of information and communication technology (ICT) in some classes is commended. This work could be developed over time, in order that the most effective use is made of the school's ICT facilities.
- Effective use was made of the white board during the lessons observed. Work sheets and notes were also distributed to the students and this work is commended. However, it is recommended that additional materials and resources would be employed, in order to contextualise the language learning for the students and to make it more interesting for them. It is recommended that podcasts, music, videos, pictures, photographs and Irish-language media would be used more regularly, together with any other material appropriate to the learning of the language.
- Significant material relating to the teaching and learning of the language is displayed in the main classroom in which Irish is taught. It is commendable that this material is on display as a support for the students' learning. It should be ensured, however, that the lettering is large enough to be read easily, so that students may draw on it when composing sentences or questions.
- Aspects of the learning of grammar were integrated into all the lessons and this approach is commended. It is necessary for both teachers and students to focus on this important aspect of the learning of the language. Care also needs to be taken with the cultivation of accuracy in speech and writing.
- Where it is obvious that a certain group of students are experiencing difficulty in writing Irish accurately it is recommended that the teachers discuss this question and devise and agree on strategies to address this.
- It was clear that home work is assigned and corrected on a regular basis. It is recommended that comments on the quality of the written work should be in Irish and that care should be taken with accuracy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The provision for Irish on the school timetable is reasonably satisfactory but it is recommended that the school management should examine the feasibility of allocating an additional teaching period to one of the junior cycle year groups.
- The efforts of the Irish teachers and of school management to give the language a high profile in the school are commended.
- Good extra-curricular and co-curricular programmes are offered in Irish. Events are organised during *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, students are brought to the theatre and the Gaeltacht, and they participate in Gael Linn debates. The school took part in the *Cló Beo* competition and the entry won first prize. It is recommended that the programme of events would be further expanded and that the recommendations and opinions of students would be sought.
- The school has a library containing excellent ICT aids and having the support of a full-time librarian. A great deal of material has been posted on the various school sites. Teachers, parents and students have access to resources and notes as an aid to their work. Information is available as to what is happening in the school on the school's own website. These services are of considerable assistance to both teachers and students.
- A budget is allocated to the Irish teachers on an annual basis. It is recommended that they should access the appropriate websites with a view to obtaining information on the resources which are available as supports for the teaching of Irish.
- External examiners visit the school in order to administer oral language examinations to third year and sixth-year students. Twice a year, all classes in the school take formal oral language examinations. This practice is highly commended.
- An analysis of the results in the state examinations is carried out annually. The number of students who take the higher-level Irish paper in the state examinations has remained constant for some time and the students' levels of attainment have improved somewhat in recent years.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The main teacher of Irish acts as co-ordinator of planning for the teaching and learning of the language. The Irish teachers convene a meeting once a term and more frequently as required in order to discuss issues. The minutes of these meetings are available in English only however.
 - A plan has been drawn up for the teaching and learning of Irish. The planning work to date is commended, particularly the work schemes which are set out clearly, effectively and on an integrated basis.
 - As part of the plan for Irish, a homework policy, an assessment policy and a description of methods of recording and reporting have been made available.
 - Comprehensive, careful planning was carried out for all the lessons. Notes, work sheets, ICT, games and aural language materials were prepared. The teachers' work in this regard is commended.
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At the conclusion of the evaluation, the draft findings and recommendations arising from this evaluation were discussed with the Principal and the subject teachers.

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Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The School Manager welcomes the report of the Irish subject inspection and its endorsement of the teaching and learning of Irish in Stratford College.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

Scheduled subject planning meetings this year will continue to review best practice in the teaching and learning of Irish including the recommendations of the report.