

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Mount Anville Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Mount Anville Rd Dublin 14
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60140F

Date of Inspection: 02-05-2018



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

SUBJECT INSPECTION

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

HOW TO READ THIS REPORT

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in English under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	1 and 2 May 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers of English• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during nine lessons• Individual feedback to teachers• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers of English

School context

Mount Anville Secondary School is a fee-charging school for girls in the trusteeship of Mount Anville Sacred Heart Education Trust. The school provides the junior cycle, a compulsory Transition Year programme, the established Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. English is a core subject in all programmes. Enrolment currently stands at 675.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The teaching observed was good or very good, with instances of excellent practice.
- Lesson activities and tasks provided meaningful and well-structured learning opportunities for students, who demonstrated a high level of purposeful engagement in their work.
- Students produce substantial written work and receive helpful feedback, although there is no single approach to commenting or grading.
- Provision for English is good and the subject is very well resourced.
- Deployment of teachers is supportive of the subject, although more favourable in senior than junior cycle.
- Well-developed and reflective subject department planning practices are evident.

Recommendations

- To build on the good practices in place, teachers of English should share and extend the use of technology as a learning tool, and should foreground the concept of valid personal response to texts.
- School management should annually review the deployment of teachers to junior and senior cycle English.
- The English department should develop an assessment policy incorporating the Leaving Certificate criteria for assessment and new junior cycle assessment practices.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Nine lessons were observed, covering all years and all programmes offered, and involving almost all the members of the English department. The quality of teaching observed was good or very good, with instances of excellent practice.
- The learning environment was supportive, stimulating, and appropriately challenging. The prevailing atmosphere reflected high expectations on the part of both teachers and students. Lesson activities and tasks provided meaningful and well-structured learning opportunities.
- A range of teaching approaches and styles was noted, but a common thread was an enthusiasm for English and a desire to engage students' interest in it and to develop their skills as speakers, readers and writers.
- The more traditional teaching approaches observed were well executed, and a good balance between teacher and student voice was maintained. Lessons were well planned, but teachers were flexible enough to depart from the planned content if an unexpected but valuable learning point surfaced in the course of the lesson and required time to explore. A senior cycle comparative study lesson which allowed very insightful discussion of relationships exemplified this flexibility.
- Some innovative practice was noted, including a co-operative model of team-teaching that worked very effectively to provide differentiated support and to allow for varied pace in learning. Technology was used in innovative ways, not simply to view visual and written texts but to support students in analysing and critiquing them, through the use of a visualiser. Such an approach is worth sharing and extending.
- At the optimal level, the teaching observed was authoritative yet also invited and affirmed students' opinions and responses. In this context, it was good to see students expressing differing points of view and justifying them confidently. To extend this highly effective practice, all teachers should be mindful of communicating to students the concept of valid personal response to texts, and the centrality of this concept to both junior cycle and Leaving Certificate English.
- Students demonstrated a responsible attitude to learning; they were well organised for lessons and had good recall of prior learning. A high level of purposeful engagement in classroom discussion and in individual and group tasks was noted, and most students showed interest and enjoyment in the texts they were studying, and in their own writing. They were generally very articulate, with a good command of sophisticated vocabulary.
- In a number of lessons, time was given for students to reflect on their progress and to use feedback on their work to consider how they might develop and improve it. This is a valuable practice and worth embedding, as it underpins junior cycle key skills and principles.
- Students' copybooks and folders contained substantial work, including extended writing in a range of genres. Work was generally of a high standard. Very good engagement with the process of drafting and re-drafting was evident. It was very good to see students deriving pleasure from the improvements they had made in their own work, as was the case in a first-year lesson observed. Peer assessment was used to develop a shared understanding of features of quality, and this practice is worth extending in junior and senior cycle.
- Written feedback on all substantial assignments is the norm, although the English department has no single approach to the use of comments or grades. The Leaving

Certificate criteria for assessment, commonly abbreviated as PCLM, were not used explicitly by teachers in the work reviewed, although teachers reported that they refer to them implicitly. The value of explicitly using the criteria and of sharing them with students through the explanatory note prepared by the State Examinations Commission is that students can become familiar with them and can be guided to apply them for themselves. It is therefore recommended that the English department adopt this practice.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetable provision for English is good in junior cycle and very good in senior cycle.
- Most teachers of English have a substantial English timetable including junior and senior cycle. This pattern of deployment supports the teaching and learning of English as a continuum of knowledge and skills development from first year to sixth.
- English is taught in base classes throughout the school. All classes are designated as higher level and almost all students take the certificate examinations at higher level. Attainment patterns indicate the validity of this approach in this school's context.
- Class sizes are significantly larger in junior than senior cycle; the present first year is the largest in the school. The possibility of increasing the number of base class groups in junior cycle and reducing it in senior cycle could be considered if this trend continues. There is merit in reviewing this situation annually.
- The English programme for Transition Year (TY) is challenging and stimulating. However, the TY group visited during the evaluation was less ready to engage with each other and with the topic than was the case with other class groups, although excellent material had been prepared. It was also the only group with a notable number of absences. While some absence from class is to be expected in the nature of TY, prolonged absences are less typical and merit investigation. A whole-school review including the perspectives of students and parents would be worthwhile in the interests of ensuring that the year is fulfilling the aims intended by the Department.
- English is very well resourced. The school has an excellent library, which is central to a number of English-related initiatives with very high rates of student participation.
- In the 2017/18 school year, the English department participated fully in the training days delivered by JCT, the professional development service for junior cycle. School management is highly supportive of continuing professional development (CPD) and a full record of teachers' involvement is maintained.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A well-defined subject department structure is in place. English is ably co-ordinated, and co-ordinator responsibilities are both organisational and developmental. They include leading the evaluation of teaching, learning, and assessment practices and outcomes in the English department. This existing structure provides a strong base on which to build into the future, especially in implementing new approaches in the junior cycle.
- Current junior cycle plans are based on the JCT-developed template, and include shared reflection on how the planned programme is working. This commendable practice will support the teachers of English in planning and implementing a programme that optimises learning opportunities for students, and ensures that new assessment practices will support students' learning.

- Assessment modes and practices are included in the subject plan. It is recommended that an assessment policy for English be developed to reflect the new junior cycle practices and to ensure that students know the criteria applicable to Leaving Certificate English.

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

THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is outstanding and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
Good	Good applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	Satisfactory applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	Fair applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	Weak applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;