

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	De La Salle College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Upper Churchtown Road Churchtown Dublin 14
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	60310E

Date of Inspection: 17-04-2018



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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	16 and 17 April 2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and subject teachers• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and subject teachers

School context

De La Salle College Churchtown is an all-boys' school under the trusteeship of Le Chéile Schools Trust. Its students come from local and more distant parts of Dublin's south suburbs and from a wide variety of cultural backgrounds. The school offers the junior cycle, a compulsory Transition Year programme, and the established Leaving Certificate. Current enrolment is 388.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching observed was good; teaching practices in the lessons observed ranged from very good to satisfactory.
- Interactions between teachers and students were supportive, respectful and encouraging.
- Work assigned generally provided an appropriate level of challenge for students, and some very good formative assessment practices were noted.
- Provision and whole-school support for English is generally very good; however, the relatively low uptake at higher level merits investigation.
- There is very good subject department co-ordination and good individual planning.

Recommendations

- To further develop current good practice, teachers should ensure that students understand what makes for a valid response, and have opportunities to consolidate and record their learning from lessons.
- Teaching approaches that integrate content and language learning should be used to support students with English as an additional language (EAL).
- Senior management and the English department should identify and implement measures to increase successful uptake of English at higher level.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The eight lessons observed covered all years, levels and programmes with the exception of Transition Year classes, which were on work experience. All members of the English department were included in lesson observations. The overall quality of teaching observed was good; teaching practices in the lessons observed ranged from very good to satisfactory.
- A good variety of teaching approaches and methods was noted. Overall, they were well selected to serve the learning purpose and to meet students' learning needs.
- Very good practice in engaging the interest and attention of students was noted in a number of lessons. In a junior cycle lesson, highly effective use of available technology allowed students to grasp complex aspects of film-making and editing. Themes arising in the studied poetry were meaningfully connected to current events in a senior cycle lesson through thought-provoking teacher exposition and subsequent discussion. Approaches such as these made even challenging learning accessible and relevant to students, and teachers are encouraged to share and develop them.
- Interactions between teachers and students were supportive, respectful and encouraging. There was a good balance of teacher and student talk. A positive and purposeful atmosphere prevailed in the classrooms visited and student behaviour was commendable.
- The question-and-response model often developed into good discussions of the topic between teacher and students, and at times into discussions between students. Discussion between students is worth encouraging and developing further. Teachers might consider either permanently or occasionally rearranging classroom seating to that end.
- Lessons were well structured, with a clear sequence to support students in building their understanding. Occasionally, good lesson activity was not sufficiently captured in written or recorded form by the end of the lesson. Teachers should incorporate into lesson planning a reflection or recording phase so that students can take away tangible evidence of their learning from the lesson.
- Classwork and assigned homework generally provided an appropriate level of challenge for students. Some student responses and homework assignments read out in class were very perceptive and articulate. In order to challenge students further in responding to texts, including unseen texts, teachers should encourage very close and careful reading, and should develop students' understanding of the concept of the valid response by asking them to refer to the texts to explain and support their views.
- The distinction to be made between students' levels of English language proficiency and their ability as learners was discussed during the evaluation, and it was acknowledged that some able EAL students, who may struggle with elements of spoken and written English, can grasp sophisticated concepts and respond to them. These students will benefit from the explicit teaching of vocabulary and language structures in the subject context so that their conceptual understanding supports their language learning.
- The in-class assessment practices observed were effective in gauging understanding and guiding lesson pace. Peer assessment was well managed, and was valuable in developing students' ability to critique their own and others' work constructively. To further develop assessment practices that support students' learning as required by the new junior cycle curriculum, the drafting process should be integrated into substantial written assignments.

- A good standard and volume of homework assignments was noted, especially in senior cycle. Clear and supportive developmental feedback was given in most cases. Teachers are encouraged to build on these good practices, using the opportunity presented by subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings to share and develop them.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling of English is optimal, both in the number and distribution of lessons.
- English is concurrently timetabled within each year group, and is taught in mixed-ability base class groups in first year. Class groups based on perceived ability are formed thereafter, with typically one higher and two ordinary-level classes in fifth and sixth year. Since the subject department has identified increased uptake of higher level as a priority, the basis for class formation should be examined in this context, to ensure that it is contributing to the raising of expectation and attainment.
- Teacher deployment is good, and senior management is proactive in building capacity within the subject team, which has undergone significant change following the retirement of long-serving teachers.
- The school supports teachers' continuing professional development (CPD), and there is a very good record of engagement with CPD.
- The subject is well resourced. Teachers have their own base classrooms, many of which have been developed as visually stimulating and print-rich learning environments. Information and communication technology is available in all rooms, and a very attractive library has been recently refurbished and is being re-stocked.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is very good. The subject is very effectively co-ordinated, a comprehensive subject plan has been drawn up, and regular meetings of the English teaching team are scheduled.
- The 2017/18 subject plan reflects a very good understanding of the junior cycle English specification, and the changes in practice it requires. While it is still relatively early days regarding the embedding of new practice, the subject department has embraced change, and sees enhanced potential to foster English as a continuum of knowledge and skills development from first to sixth year.
- Teachers' individual plans for the year groups that they teach are quite detailed. Teachers could consider working collectively on year plans to facilitate more detailed discussion of the relevant learning outcomes. Amendments and annotations could be added to these as necessary to reflect the specific context of the various class groups within the year. Some of the current individual plans are annotated with teachers' reflections on how well they worked in practice, and this is commendable.
- With regard to planning for improved outcomes and attainment, the majority of students take ordinary level in Leaving Certificate English and the subject department recognises a pattern of very high attainment at this level. While the ordinary level course may have been the correct choice for many of these students, the possibility that students capable of doing well at higher level are opting for ordinary level is a cause for concern. The English department should examine this pattern and, in co-operation with senior management, consider what actions could and should be taken to ensure that as many students as possible successfully take higher level English.

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

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;