

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in English**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Christian Brothers, Synge St.
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Synge St., Dublin 8.
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60470D

**Date of Inspection: 24-04-2018**



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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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	23 and 24-04-2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven lessons, including one double lesson</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Christian Brothers School Synge Street is a long-established voluntary secondary school for boys, under the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice Schools Trust. It offers the Junior Cycle/Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme, the Transition Year programme, and the established Leaving Certificate. Total enrolment in 2017/18 is 218 and there is currently no sixth year, because of the recent introduction of Transition Year. The school participates in the DEIS initiative to deliver equality of opportunity in schools.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching was good; practice observed ranged from highly effective to satisfactory.
- Teachers adhered consistently to a student-centred view of teaching and learning, and adopted an integrated approach to the teaching of the key language skills for English.
- Students were engaged and co-operative in all lessons, and worked well both individually and collaboratively.
- Assessment practices were generally good, but developmental feedback was not always evident.
- English is very well provided for and resourced.
- Very good subject department planning practices are in place.

#### Recommendations

- To build on the good practices observed, teachers should strengthen the links between students' oral communication and their written work, and further develop students' understanding of what makes for a valid response.
- The teaching team should use the opportunity provided through subject learning and assessment review meetings to develop a shared understanding of the quality of students' work, and of approaches to assessment that will progress learning.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The seven lessons observed covered all years, levels and programmes offered, and involved all six teachers of English. Overall, the quality of teaching of English was good; practice in the lessons observed ranged from highly effective to satisfactory.
- The teachers of English showed a high level of commitment to the subject and to their students in their observed practice and in their engagement with the evaluation process.
- While teachers used a wide range of approaches, there was a consistent adherence to a student-centred view of the teaching and learning process, which provided a good balance of challenge and support. Classwork was successfully managed to allow students to investigate texts and to begin to shape their own responses.
- Lessons were very well planned, with clear statements regarding learning intentions, and a purposeful sequence of learning activities. In most cases, lessons concluded with a brief review of learning to affirm progress and identify areas for further work. Students also received helpful guidance on how to review and consolidate their learning.
- In general, good material was selected to support students in developing the necessary skills for appreciation and analysis of texts. In one instance, the junior cycle textbook in use proved confusing rather than helpful in identifying language register. In such cases, teachers should explicitly question the textbook's accuracy, as this would provide a valuable demonstration of critical literacy for students. In a more general way, teachers should avoid over-reliance on textbooks, especially in the context of curriculum change.
- There was a purposeful focus throughout on the key language skills of speaking, listening, reading, and writing. An integrated approach was taken to skills development, and in both junior and senior cycle lessons there were very good instances of creative modelling, where close reading of a text led to writing tasks imitating its style and structure. To build on this good practice, teachers should consider how students' oral responses to a text might best be channelled to prepare them for writing based on that text.
- In a number of lessons, visual texts were used either as stimulus or as texts in their own right. Some very good practice in building visual literacy skills was noted, and is worth further development. While using texts as stimulus is an invitation to students to be creative, critical analysis of texts, including visual texts, should always emphasise the requirement for a valid, well-supported response.
- Teachers are doing good work in helping students to understand concepts that are central to areas of the English specification and syllabus. A fifth-year class working on key moments in comparative texts engaged well with this concept. It is suggested that concretising the concept as much as possible would be a supportive approach.
- Students were engaged and co-operative in all lessons, and were generally very responsive and ready to give their views. They worked well individually and in groups, and productive lesson tasks were completed, although occasionally responses from groups took up too much time. Gathering feedback following group work can be difficult, and teachers could consider asking students for their views on how to manage this effectively.
- Assessment practices were generally good. Students' copybooks and folders generally contained a substantial volume of work, and in most cases there was evident progress made, including examples of excellent work. Some very good developmental feedback was noted, though not in all cases. The engagement with subject learning and assessment review (SLAR)

meetings, which has now begun, should provide a valuable opportunity to develop a shared understanding of the quality of students' work and of the assessment practices that are most effective in improving quality.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Timetable provision for English is excellent, both in the number and distribution of lessons for all year groups. Concurrent timetabling, where it exists, is used effectively to meet specific needs in junior cycle and to create level-specific class groups in senior cycle.
- Teacher deployment to English is well managed in the context of a small school. Three teachers take just one class group for English, while the other three have more substantial contact with the subject. As far as possible, school management should strive for a balance between consolidating the teaching of English and building capacity in the teaching team.
- English is well resourced, and classrooms are well developed as learning environments for the subject.
- Students' literacy needs are well supported through a range of initiatives and good whole-school communication about supports for individual students. The English teaching team includes teachers with expertise in special educational needs.
- Teachers are encouraged and supported to engage in continuing professional development, and records of their involvement are carefully maintained.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Teachers' individual planning and preparation was very good.
- Good and reflective collaborative practice is evident in the subject plan, which is well organised and responsive to the needs of students.
- The subject is co-ordinated effectively, a responsibility rotated among the teaching team.
- The subject plan integrates supports for students with special educational needs, including students with English as an additional language.
- The school has worked with other DEIS schools to analyse outcomes for students on a 'schools like ours' basis. This is a very helpful initiative in providing a baseline and informing targets to support action planning for improvement.

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 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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;