

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

**Subject Inspection in English**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Marian College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Ballsbridge Dublin 4
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	60500J

**Date of Inspection: 13-12-2018**



---

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.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## **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>	13 and 14 December 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 in six hour-long lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and the subject department</li></ul>

### School context

Marian College is a well-established school for boys under the trusteeship of the Marist Brothers. The school has a diverse intake and participates in DEIS, the Department's action plan for equality of opportunity in schools. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. Current enrolment stands at 358.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching was good; practice in the lessons observed ranged from very good to adequate.
- Practice was highly effective where the structure, sequence, and variety of learning activities fully exploited the one-hour lesson timeframe; at times, structure and variety were lacking.
- Students were generally engaged and attentive, and notably so in the writing process.
- Timetable provision for English is generous but many English teachers take only one or two class groups.
- Year plans have been drawn up, but subject planning is insufficiently developed.

#### Recommendations

- Teaching and learning approaches to optimise the one-hour lesson time should be explored and shared, both at subject department and whole-school level.
- School management should aim for more consolidated deployment of teachers of English.
- Subject planning practice and the plans produced should be substantially revised to present the subject as a continuum of knowledge and skills development from first year to sixth.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Six one-hour lessons were observed, covering all year groups except first year, and involving all teachers with a substantial English timetable. Overall, the quality of teaching was good. Practice in the lessons observed ranged from very good to adequate. Teachers generally displayed very good subject knowledge and effective classroom management skills.
- Lessons demonstrating highly effective practice were very well prepared and organised, with well-planned sequencing of learning activities to make the best use of the one-hour lesson time. Where lessons were productive and purposeful from beginning to end, teachers were clearly aware of what students could engage with and accomplish in the timeframe, and spoke very positively of the scope afforded by the longer lesson time.
- Some very good development of writing skills was observed, both in junior and senior cycle, demonstrating how a process approach to writing in the junior cycle can provide very good foundations on which to build Leaving Certificate skills. Through this commendable focus on the craft of writing, students learned how the careful manipulation of language would create the effect they were aiming for. They engaged in purposeful drafting and redrafting, and produced substantial pieces in specific genres.
- Group tasks were most effective where the tasks were genuinely co-operative, requiring students to take on specific work and to then pool their knowledge in order to complete the task. In some cases, groups with a range of abilities were formed, providing good opportunities for peer support.
- The one-hour lessons allowed for a mix of group and individual tasks, along with some whole-class discussion, and this kind of well-planned variety was seen to be effective in maintaining the learning momentum. In some lessons, students' attention began to wander before the lesson end, either because the learning activities planned lacked sufficient clarity of purpose, or there was over-reliance on a single teaching approach. Since the one-hour timetable is new this year, it would be worth discussing and sharing, both at subject department and whole-school level, the teaching and learning approaches that fully exploit its potential.
- Reading and writing skills were well integrated in some lessons. For example, students creating a narrative with a circular structure were prompted to make the link themselves to the same circular structure in the short novel they were reading. Teachers should collectively explore the various ways in which skills can be integrated to deepen students' understanding and competence.
- The quality of learning was good overall, and purposeful work was noted in all lessons, though with variations in quality and in levels of application. Students were generally engaged and attentive, and indeed high levels of motivation were apparent in a number of instances, especially where lessons were well structured.
- Students' oral and written work reflected a wide range of ability and accomplishment. Most students were able to complete the tasks set in class, and some work of high quality was noted in lessons and in students' copybooks. Some good differentiation of tasks took place; in one instance students doing an in-class assignment could choose from a range of levels of challenge. This allowed for upward and downward differentiation, and the teacher's vigilance ensured that students chose suitably.

- In a number of lessons, students responded to a piece of writing, or critiqued their own or their peers' written work in a constructive manner. The growing awareness among students of the features of good writing merits teachers' continued focus. This could be achieved through ensuring an explicit reference to success criteria when setting a writing task, and through structured self-assessment and peer assessment based on these criteria.
- In general, student copybooks and folders contained a good volume of work and a range of assignment types. Different approaches to assessment and feedback were noted; good developmental feedback to students on substantial written assignments is well established practice in some but not all cases.
- Teachers' familiarity with the changes in junior cycle assessment practices varied. To exploit the potential for students to build on and develop the skills gained in the junior cycle, all teachers need a good understanding of junior cycle assessment.

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

- The timetable provides generously for English in the number of lessons, given the one-hour length. Lessons are well distributed throughout the week, except for one first-year group which has English only on Thursday and Friday, reportedly to accommodate a PME student teacher. This situation should be avoided in future, as it limits students' opportunity to have regular reinforcement of their developing language skills.
- Eight teachers and a PME student teacher are currently teaching English in Marian College. This is a very large team for the size of school, making for very dispersed deployment; only two teachers have English as the largest component of their timetables, and three teach one class group only. School management should, to the greatest extent possible, work towards more consolidated deployment.
- Classrooms are well resourced with information and communication technology (ICT) which was used skilfully in a number of lessons. In many rooms, however, there were few displays of visual or print material relating to English. This is an area to be addressed in order to enrich the learning environment and to offer students a means of showcasing their work.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Year plans for junior cycle refer to the learning outcomes in the specification, but call them 'learning objectives', and this should be amended. While the plans indicate coverage of a wide range of texts and of the oral, reading, and writing strands, they require considerable development to balance the content-driven approach with a greater focus on the development of knowledge and skills. There is considerable scope to include a more integrated approach to language and literature.
- TY plans are presented as individual teacher plans describing three common modules. They share some good elements, such as differentiation of outcomes. They would benefit from a rethinking of the modules in the light of students' experience of English at junior cycle, and should avoid overuse of Leaving Certificate texts. An introduction to critical literacy skills would be more appropriate.
- Leaving Certificate plans refer separately to Paper 1 and Paper 2. A more integrated approach to language and literature is recommended, in line with the syllabus. All plans should be carefully reviewed to ensure that they comply with the prescribed texts and modes of comparison.

- Planning for English requires considerable development, to underpin an understanding of the subject as a continuum of knowledge and skills development from first year to sixth, and with assessment clearly aligned to learning outcomes. An overarching document that articulates the English specification and the syllabus in terms of the school's specific context is recommended.

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

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

### **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Marian College welcomes the report and commends its staff and students for the quality of teaching, learning and assessment.

### **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

The Board of Marian College welcomes the recommendations issued by the Department of Education Inspectorate.

The school will continue the review process with regard to subject planning.

The Board will consider the recommendations regarding deployment of teaching staff and PME timetabling within the current recruitment and retention context.



## 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;