

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

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Presentation Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Miltown Killarney Co Kerry
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61410N

Date of Inspection: 13-10-2016



WHAT IS A 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. Learning, teaching 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.

Subject Inspection

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	12 & 13 October 2016
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Presentation Secondary School is a co-educational secondary school with a current enrolment of 562 students. The school is a Presentation school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate (Established).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good overall.
- English teachers have developed impressive learning environments in base classrooms.
- A good standard of practice was observed in the area of assessment.
- Overall, there is very good whole-school support for English.
- The school has implemented very good arrangements to support English teachers in developing their professional practice.
- A comprehensive subject-department plan has been developed with well-organised common schemes of work.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the area of questioning should be considered by the English department in order to build on good practice already present in the department.
- The organisation of moderation meetings as a support for assessment practice should be pursued.
- The school should review lesson length, in order to effectively support the learning needs of students.
- Recommendations with regard to compliance and improvement in the area of junior cycle English contained in the body of this report should be addressed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was very good overall. Lessons observed were very good in almost all instances, with one example of good practice. Classroom management was of a high standard. Students were engaged and contributed positively to lessons. All lessons had a clear structure.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively and appropriately where it was observed. As a further extension of this good work, the use of visualisers should be investigated by the English department. Possibilities afforded by the adoption of a virtual learning environment could also be considered.
- Questioning was a frequent strategy used in lessons. Various forms of questioning were used, including individual teacher-student exchanges, and questions set out for groups to discuss and explore. Very good practice was observed where teachers placed particular emphasis on higher-order questioning of students. It is recommended that the area of questioning should be considered by the English department in order to build on good practice already present in the department.
- English teachers have developed impressive learning environments in base classrooms. A strong emphasis on the development of students' vocabulary was evident in all rooms, and teachers used their rooms as learning resources.
- A wide range of oral language, reading and writing activities was observed. Of particular note was teachers' use of comprehension strategies which included prediction, anticipation, and visualisation strategies, among others. To build on this good practice, the department should incorporate the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies in the future.
- A good standard of practice was observed in the area of assessment. Students' work is regularly monitored and corrected. There were examples of very good and good practice in the area of formative feedback. As a means of further extending the department's expertise in the area of assessment, the adoption of moderation meetings with regard to the marking of student work should be considered at particular moments in the school year. This recommendation is made with due consideration of the need for such approaches to be manageable.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, there is very good whole-school support for English. An appropriate number and distribution of English lessons is provided for across the school week in all year groups. However, the length of lessons is between thirty-six and thirty-seven minutes due to historical considerations. It is recommended that the school should review lesson length, in order to ensure compliance with circular 24/2016 which highlights the need for schools to achieve a length of lesson which best supports the learning needs of students. This recommendation is made with a full acknowledgement that the school has already moved towards considering

the best timetabling arrangements that can be organised to support teaching and learning. This review has included the possibility of moving towards lessons of one hour's duration.

- Currently, English classes are of mixed-ability in first year. In senior cycle, classes are set, with mixed-ability groups within levels. This is good practice and has arisen from the department's continuing focus on how to improve outcomes for their students. Students in junior cycle are currently banded within levels from the beginning of second year. The department is encouraged to continue to review class organisation in this area carefully, particularly with a view to the potential impact of this latter arrangement on uptake of levels.
- The school has implemented very good arrangements to support English teachers in developing their professional practice. Of particular note is the commitment from senior management to supporting a sustained focus on particular programmes of CPD, the existence of a learning and teaching team which includes members of the English department and the very good practice of peer and video coaching which is being developed.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A comprehensive subject department plan has been developed. This is based on the junior cycle specification and the senior cycle syllabus. The department has a well-developed subject improvement plan. The plan is informed by whole-school initiatives in teaching and learning, but also incorporates a subject-specific focus.
- Very good work has been undertaken in planning for English. The department has engaged with a range of new and interesting texts from the prescribed and indicative lists for junior cycle English. In the context of the implementation of the new specification in junior cycle, a number of recommendations in the area of planning are made: links to the primary curriculum should be emphasised in the first-year plan; the number of learning outcomes in each unit should be reduced in order to provide a clear focus on key learning to be achieved; assessment tasks should be planned simultaneously with planning for learning; and it is suggested that the collection of the student's texts could form an element in students' summative school assessments each year.
- In the case of junior cycle, teachers have undertaken oral communication tasks with their class groups and the development of the student's collection of texts is underway. However, teachers have not conducted Classroom Based Assessment (CBA) 1 in English in accordance with the advice in the Junior Cycle Specification for English, 2015 and as required by Circular 0024/2016. In addition, no subject learning and review (SLAR) meeting has taken place with regard to CBA1. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action. In order to ensure that students benefit from the full range of learning experiences, as outlined in the English specification, it is recommended that teachers implement all aspects of the English specification including Classroom-Based Assessments. Furthermore, teachers should engage in SLAR meetings after the CBAs have been completed in order to build a common understanding of the quality of student learning and to quality assure the assessment of students' work as outlined in the Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the 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 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 wholeschool 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;

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