

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Presentation College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Putland Road Bray Co. Wicklow
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	61800D

Date of Inspection: 12-09-2018



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
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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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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	11-09-2018 and 12-09-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal• Discussion with subject co-ordinator• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during nine lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to individual teachers• Feedback to principal and all members of the English department

School context

Presentation College Bray is a long-established school for boys serving the town of Bray and a wider catchment. It is in the trusteeship of the Presentation Brothers Schools Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year programme with very high uptake, and the established Leaving Certificate. English is a core subject in all programmes.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching was good overall, with observed practice ranging from excellent to adequate.
- Overall, lessons demonstrated teachers' commitment to the subject and to their students, but there was a tendency for teacher talk to dominate.
- The quality of learning observed was good, although there is some concern that not all students are aiming to attain their full potential.
- Good, and at times very good, formative assessment practice is in place.
- English is well resourced and provided for.
- Subject department planning is very good, supporting reflective and responsive practice.

Recommendations

- Teachers should work collaboratively to develop and share approaches and resources that will provide a balance of support and challenge to students.
- Teachers should plan lessons with sufficient time allocated to active student learning, and should guard against the over-prominence of teacher voice.
- School management should consider the provision of a school library.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Nine lessons were observed during the evaluation, covering all years and programmes, and involving almost all the teachers of English. Overall, the quality of teaching was good. Practice in the lessons observed ranged from excellent to adequate.
- While the English department encompasses a wide variety of teaching styles and approaches, teachers share a commitment to the subject and to their students, and show great interest in professional dialogue to develop and improve their practice.
- The quality of learning in the lessons observed was good. The English department and senior management are committed to ensuring that students achieve their full potential and they expressed some concern that students may not be aiming as high as they are capable of. There is scope to further develop students' ownership of and responsibility for learning. It is therefore recommended that students receive a consistent message about high expectations and, to ensure that these expectations can be realised, students need an appropriate balance of challenge and support as they progress in their learning.
- Teacher preparation for lessons was good, and some of the resources and materials selected to support the learning intentions were very rich and imaginative, including digital and audio material. Visualisers were used very effectively in some lessons to aid understanding and analysis of texts. More extended use of such stimulating resources would help students to engage successfully in increasingly challenging work.
- A productive sequence of learning activities was generally evident in lessons. The lesson plan was not always fully realised, either because pace was slower than anticipated or other valuable learning points surfaced during the lesson. In reflecting on their lessons, teachers showed good awareness of the need to provide more time for learning, and to modify lesson content accordingly. The learning intentions whiteboards in classrooms could be used to reinforce this learner-focused approach.
- Teacher and student voice was well balanced in a number of lessons, but there was a general tendency for teacher talk to dominate. Teachers should be mindful that oral skills development, in both junior and senior cycle, requires opportunities for students to talk and listen to each other in a purposeful manner.
- Teacher voice was seen to have most value in three specific areas: direct teaching which encompassed the exploration of concepts and not just information; the organisation and explanation of lesson tasks so that students could work with a clear understanding of procedure, purpose and objective; and responding to texts in a way that modelled the engaged reader and writer for students. All teachers could focus on these types of input, which provide valuable guidance to students.
- Students' attitudes to learning in the class groups visited ranged from the highly engaged and motivated to bare compliance with classroom activity in the case of a small number of students. Overall, however, students were diligent and co-operative; although generally rather quiet, they readily asked questions. Classroom management was good at all times, and contributed to maintaining a prevailing atmosphere of purposeful work.
- Students generally responded well to opportunities to learn with and from each other. Some productive and well-organised group work was observed, structured so that the involvement of all students was required. It was good to see well-structured individual work also, with subsequent sharing and comparing, which students engaged well with and benefited from.

- While students' classwork and homework varied in standard, some very accomplished written work was noted. The practice of using samples of students' writing as an opportunity for learning for the whole class was observed in a few junior and senior cycle lessons and worked very effectively. It is worth extending this practice both to affirm good work and to provide models for other students to engage with and learn from.
- Good formative assessment of students' work was noted and, where practice was highly effective, teachers directed students towards specific aspects for improvement. The new junior cycle assessment practices are being embedded in the English department's way of working, and the process approach to writing, involving self-assessment and redrafting, is visible throughout the junior cycle.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The school timetable makes good provision for English, with a very generous allocation of six lessons per week in fifth and sixth year.
- Teachers of English are generally, though not always, timetabled to teach in both junior and senior cycle. Deployment to both cycles should happen to the greatest extent possible, as it enables teachers to view and teach the subject as a continuum of knowledge and skills development from first year to sixth.
- English is taught in mixed-ability class groups throughout the junior cycle. Almost all students take the subject at higher level in the junior cycle examination. In fifth and sixth year, a discrete class group is formed to accommodate the small number of students taking ordinary level. A careful annual analysis of outcomes informs these arrangements.
- Arising from this analysis, a 'top set' for English has been formed in fifth and sixth year with a view to enhancing outcomes for students with the potential to excel. The impact of this initiative both on the target group and the whole cohort is being closely monitored.
- English is generally very well resourced. A number of teachers have well-equipped base classrooms in the same area, creating an identifiable space for English. Although the new school building includes a library area, there is no library at present. The school should explore the possibilities available, including liaison with the local public library service.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- English is very ably co-ordinated, and due attention is given to both organisational and developmental aspects of subject planning. A commendably strong culture of individual and collaborative reflection has been developed, and is valued by senior management.
- Junior cycle plans are shaped by a growing understanding of the need to align the learning outcomes in the English specification with valid forms of assessment, and appropriate learning experiences and teaching approaches. The 'units of learning' approach being developed has great potential to provide rich and purposeful experiences for students.
- The department's collective practice demonstrates flexibility and responsiveness to change. The desire to instil in students higher expectations of themselves is commendable, as is the recognition that the process has to begin with students in first year, and build cumulatively.

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 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;