

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Saint Raphael's College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Loughrea County Galway
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63070C

Date of Inspection: 27-03-2019



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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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

Date(s) of inspection	26-03-2019 & 27-03-2019
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Raphael's College is a co-educational post-primary school under the trusteeship of the Catholic Education Irish School Trust (CEIST). It has a current enrolment of 634 students and offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching was good, teachers were well prepared for all lessons, and a high standard of subject knowledge was frequently evident.
- Very good work is being undertaken by teachers to develop students' vocabulary and word consciousness.
- While opportunities exist for the further development of students' oral communication skills, the overall standard of learning was good.
- Some very effective examples of formative feedback were seen.
- Whole-school provision for English is very good, representing the commitment of management and teachers to the development of the subject.
- Teachers' individual planning is good but opportunities exist for a greater sharing of practice.

Recommendations

- To further foster subject-specific oracy, teachers should plan for greater opportunities for students to engage in co-operative learning and consolidated exploratory talk.
- Management and teachers should explore how the showcasing of exemplars and student work might make the writing process more transparent and further develop student presentational talk.
- To build on existing good practice, teaching and learning should be prioritised at department meetings through the formalised sharing of good practices, materials, and methodologies among teachers.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- In total, eight lessons were seen during the inspection encompassing all year groups and subject teachers. The quality of teaching was good, teachers were well prepared for all lessons, and a high standard of subject knowledge was frequently evident.
- Effective questioning was seen in those instances where teachers asked students to collaborate or to “think-pair-share” before answering to the teacher. In the most effective instances, it encouraged students to form and frame significant personal responses. School self-evaluation (SSE) has focused on this area recently and the school’s intention to increase the use of approaches such as extended wait time, asking students to follow up on the answers of others, and following peer discussion with plenaries, will build on existing strengths.
- Very good work is being undertaken to develop students’ word consciousness. A number of different approaches to language development were seen including the cultivation of word banks, explicitly asking students to use newly encountered words, and the organisation of spelling competitions for first-year and second-year students.
- The standard of learning observed was good overall; this ranged from satisfactory, in a minority of instances, to very good. In the best lessons, clarity regarding the learning to be undertaken was achieved through the sharing of learning intentions and the developmental sequencing of tasks. In some instances, the number of tasks to be covered by students limited opportunities for deeper reflection through exploratory talk or individual writing. Learning was generally optimised where teachers designed tasks that developed the learning intention, were appropriately challenging for all, and allowed for developed and extended student responses.
- It is highly commendable that teachers support and progress student learning through the regular use and co-creation of success criteria. It would now be worthwhile for teachers to further model the use of such resources as means of enabling students to develop their effectiveness as learners. In general, it is evident that the subject department is actively engaged in supporting student efficacy through the development and introduction of effective self and peer assessment resources.
- Students are given opportunities to be active in their learning. Pair-work was observed to be an effective and inclusive support for individual learning. In the most effective instances, students engaged in rich and supportive peer learning throughout group tasks that were well managed by teachers.
- In many of the lessons, the further sharing and debating of student ideas would have benefited learning. As a means of fostering high-quality subject-specific talk, consideration should be given to how dialogue between students may be developmentally increased. It would be worthwhile to explore how whole-class plenaries and increased opportunities for exploratory and presentational talk could further develop oral language skills.

- A few instances of digital learning technologies to support or amplify learning were observed. In a number of instances, the use of digital display technology would have benefited student learning and such use should be further extended. In particular, it would be worthwhile to consider how the showcasing of exemplars and student work might make the writing process more transparent and further develop student presentational talk.
- Student copybooks and folders contained work that was of a good standard overall. This has been supported by teachers who have engaged in very good work relating to written formative feedback. Such work is extremely worthwhile and approaches such as the use of codes, checklists for peer and self-assessment, and the communicating of specific steps for improvement were seen. The planned introduction of a portfolio of student writing in first year will further benefit the development of a process approach to writing.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support and provision for English. Timetable provision for the subject is in line with syllabus requirements, a core team with strong subject knowledge is deployed to teach the subject, and well-resourced teacher-based classrooms for all teachers of English present stimulating, print-rich environments that support learning.
- Two notable instances of classroom layout supporting exploratory talk and co-operative learning were observed; an exploration of how desk arrangements can facilitate peer learning and collaboration would be worthwhile.
- The assessment policy is being revised, as per Circular 15/2017, to incorporate the substitution of Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) for in-house assessments at particular points in students' second and third-year studies. This change will support the manageability of assessment for teachers and avoid over-assessment of students.
- The co-curricular culture of the school is supportive to the development of English-related skills, attitudes and knowledge. It is positive that co-curricular events are organised by teachers to support students' learning such as public speaking, *Poetry Aloud*, and that the school library is managed by teachers during lunch-time.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Individual planning is good and teachers have collectively developed a significant subject plan. Schemes of work have also been diligently prepared. In recent years, valuable work was undertaken in developing the Junior Cycle scheme and minutes of meetings reflect a department that is progressively deepening its understanding of the specification and its assessment modes. To further develop this good work, it is advised that the scheme for Junior Cycle be developed to include key learning statements for its thematic units of learning. Such an approach can consolidate and further clarify the particular learning outcomes and assessment details specified in the scheme.
- Teachers work together and have informal discussions about teaching and learning in addition to scheduled meetings. The English department has grown in number in recent years and it is now an appropriate time to formally structure the sharing of practice in a way that complements existing professional interactions. It is recommended that teaching and learning should be prioritised at department meetings through the formalised sharing of

good practices, materials, and methodologies among teachers. These should be documented within the subject plan.

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 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;