

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Meán Scoil An Chlochair
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Kilbeggan Co. Westmeath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63221U

Date of Inspection: 06-11-2019



**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.

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	06-11-2019
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 six lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Meánscoil an Chlochair is a co-educational post-primary school operating under the trusteeship of Catholic Education an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). The school has a current enrolment of 595 students and offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good or good in almost all lessons; excellent practices were observed in some.
- Teachers' commitment and interest in their subject was evident in all lessons.
- Effective assessment practices such as the sharing and reviewing of learning intentions and range of questioning characterised all lessons; examples of meaningful, written formative feedback were also observed, but not consistently.
- Teachers used a range of methodologies and resources to enhance students' learning experiences; however, there is scope to further develop differentiated strategies.
- While good progress has been made with regard to collaborative planning in the department, some aspects of subject planning require further development.

Recommendations

- To support the range of abilities in classes, the department should seek to consistently incorporate differentiation strategies into the teaching and learning of the subject.
- English teachers should share practices on, and agree common strategies, to the teaching of a process approach to writing across all year groups.
- Collaboration in the English department should be further developed by more frequent formal team meetings to facilitate the sharing of resources and good practice.
- Schemes of work should be further enhanced by linking units of learning and the associated learning outcomes with specific methodologies, formative and summative assessment tasks and resources.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- In the majority of cases, the quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good with excellent practices observed in some lessons.
- Very good relationships between teachers and students were in evidence in all classrooms. Also, many teachers had created interesting and vibrant learning spaces that promoted the subject and celebrated students' work. A few classrooms had seating arrangements that were particularly conducive to student collaboration.
- Teachers' own enthusiasm for, and interest in, English was demonstrated in all lessons which in turn impacted positively on students' learning.
- English teachers showed very good professional engagement in the feedback sessions during the evaluation and were very willing to accept suggestions for developing practice. This is indicative of the commendable reflective practices in this school.
- Teachers explicitly shared learning intentions with students at the outset of lessons and many returned to those intentions at the end so that learning would be consolidated. To further extend these good practices, learning intentions should be described in student-friendly language and, where possible, explicitly linked to prior learning.
- Teachers used a range of methodologies and resources to enhance students' learning experiences such as mini whiteboards, active and collaborative pair and group tasks. In many lessons students were facilitated to share and showcase their learning with their peers and engage in exploratory discussion, offering their opinions on characters and engaging closely with the texts being studied. At these times, students' enjoyment of their learning was palpable.
- In many lessons, students had opportunities to link their learning in English to their own interests and experiences which enhanced their enjoyment and engagement in the lesson while developing life skills such as listening, analysing and discussing.
- Teachers' differentiation practices for the most part focused on targeting questions to specific students during group work. In many lessons, opportunities to support the learning and achievement of all students could have been further developed. Specific differentiation strategies that offer appropriate levels of challenge and support for all abilities should be planned and implemented.
- Effective assessment strategies were in evidence in the majority of lessons especially with regard to the use of higher-order and lower-order questioning, peer marking and exit slips. In one lesson students benefited greatly from opportunities to suggest and discuss the success criteria of the lesson.
- The review of a sample of students' copybooks showed that students require further opportunities to engage in substantial writing pieces and, to support this, it is recommended that English teachers develop a common approach to embedding a draft/redraft approach to writing. Regular written formative feedback on students' work was in evidence but was not provided consistently. A consistent approach to the recording, assignment and monitoring of homework should be agreed as an addendum to the schools' assessment policy.
- Commendably, the whole-school focus on key words was in evidence in many lessons and many classrooms had key-word lists to support students learning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for the subject and classrooms are well equipped.
- The English team is planning for the development of a school library to support and encourage reading and for extending cross-curricular and extra-curricular opportunities for the promotion of English outside the classroom.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Currently, two teachers act jointly as subject co-ordinators, with admirable commitment to the development of English. While there are a number of strengths in the department's collective planning and preparation, some action is required to improve the formal functioning of the subject department.
- While the department members meet informally, formal whole-team meetings occur less frequently. Regular formal subject department meetings would assist in the sharing of good practice, the development of agreed procedures or policies, and build continuity in approach between junior and senior cycle English.
- Course-delivery schemes for all year groups have been developed but some areas are in need of improvement, specifically in relation to the aligning of learning outcomes with assessment practices and teaching methodologies.
- It is good practice that analysis of attainment data has commenced and valuable discussion has already taken place as to how this data can inform future planning for improvement. Further reflective practice takes place as part of the school self-evaluation process. Such good practices should be included in a developmental section of the subject plan that will outline the vision for the subject going forward.

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 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 of 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;