

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

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Wilson's Hospital School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Multyfarnham Co Westmeath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63300Q

Date of Inspection: 19-10-2017



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. 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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	19-10-2017
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 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Wilson's Hospital School is a co-educational post-primary school in Co. Westmeath under the trusteeship of the Church of Ireland. The school offers a good range of programmes and subjects including the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and a compulsory Transition Year (TY). At the time of the inspection the school had an enrolment of 379 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of teaching and learning ranged from satisfactory to good and there were instances of very good practice in a few lessons.
- In the majority of lessons there was an imbalance between teacher and student talk where students should have been given more opportunity to actively engage in their own learning.
- A minority of base classrooms displayed very good print-rich environments that promoted the subject, celebrated student achievement and encouraged a positive, student-centred learning environment.
- There is very good provision and support for the subject in the school.
- Evidence of good individual planning and preparation was presented during the evaluation but the practical application of the subject plan in all lessons is an area for development.
- The school offers an excellent range of co-curricular and cross-curricular activities that promote student engagement in English.

Recommendations

- Clear and attainable learning outcomes should be shared with students at the beginning of the lesson, referred to as the lesson progresses and time should be set aside at the end for their review.
- The English team should use formal meeting and planning time to collaboratively develop the subject plan, reflect on attainment, both in in-house and in certificate examinations and to progress methodologies that will enhance student engagement in learning.
- Teachers should implement all aspects of school-based assessment associated with the junior cycle English specification, including classroom-based assessments (CBAs) and subject learning and review (SLAR) meetings.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The teaching and learning in lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to good. There were instances of very good practice in a few lessons.
- Students were respectful, affirmed by teachers and were supported by teachers' strong subject-specialist knowledge.
- A minority of classrooms visited displayed a print rich environment that promotes the subject in a learner-friendly environment. The English department is encouraged to share ideas on how best the classroom can be utilised to encourage student interest and engagement.
- Some classrooms had desk arrangements that are conducive to collaborative learning among students and this is encouraged in all classrooms.
- Learning intentions, which link to previous learning, and efforts to highlight the relevance of the learning to students, were lacking. These should be highlighted at the beginning of the lesson and reviewed at its conclusion. This will help students focus on what they are learning and consequently allow them more autonomy as learners.
- Inadequate planning for differentiated resources and tasks to support learners of all abilities was noted in a number of lessons. Planning for lessons should include the preparation for the differentiation of learning intentions and learning activities to ensure the learning needs of all students are met.
- In many lessons, a balance was not always maintained between the teachers' input and productive student participation. Therefore, it is recommended that students are given more opportunities to work independently and collaboratively in a purposeful manner.
- While some group work was in evidence in a few lessons observed, the learning potential could be maximised by a more structured approach to this activity. This can be achieved by setting clearly-defined timeframes and assigning specific roles within the group, with the objective of facilitating students to explore, develop and demonstrate their own learning.
- While some good exemplars were observed in general, more widespread use of information and communications technology (ICT) is encouraged in all English lessons with the view to providing visual resources for students and to enhance engagement and learning. Sharing and reflecting on the use of ICT in the classroom is encouraged at subject team meetings.
- Good questioning strategies to assess comprehension were in evidence in many lessons. Greater use of higher-order questioning for the purpose of stimulating substantial student responses and facilitating deeper engagement with lesson content is encouraged across the department at all levels. This can often be achieved in co-operative group settings.
- Homework is set in the majority of lessons but regular, meaningful and formative feedback was absent from a number of lessons. This level of feedback is required to help learners identify their strengths and weaknesses and to target areas that are in need of improvement.
- Teachers should discuss, at team level, the best ways to provide students with regular constructive, developmental oral and written feedback on their work. The development and implementation of a department-based homework and assessment policy would support this.
- Teachers should implement all aspects of school-based assessment associated with the junior cycle English specification, including classroom-based assessments (CBAs) and subject learning and review (SLAR) meetings.

- Encouragingly, a number of initiatives to improve and develop the school library, which is currently in use as a classroom, and to support literacy in the school, are being developed this year.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support for English. Provision for English on the school timetable is very good.
- There are excellent cross-curricular, intra-curricular and co-curricular opportunities for students that support students in making meaningful connections between school-based learning and learning that takes place in their own lives.
- Currently, many students with special educational needs are being withdrawn from English classes. It is recommended that other models, such as in-class support and team-teaching, are further explored in order to maximise the learning potential of all students.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A subject plan has been formulated and includes schemes of work at both junior and senior levels. At junior level, the common schemes are detailed and time linked, supporting common assessment procedures and a learning-outcomes approach. The English team should collaboratively discuss and reflect on such approaches to ensure their widespread implementation in all lessons.
- Subject planning at senior level, including TY, is an area for development for the English department. The linking of teaching methodologies and assessment with learning outcomes, is strongly encouraged.
- Minutes of meetings, including collaborative discussions on teaching, learning and assessment, particularly in the area of common in-house assessments, should be documented and included in the subject plan.
- The subject plan should include provision for students with English as an additional language so they have opportunities to achieve intended learning outcomes and experience success in English lessons.
- The English department has documented students' results and uptake levels in the certificate examinations on the subject plan, which is good practice. However, the documentation of teachers' interpretation, analysis and self-evaluation of results is needed in order to inform future planning.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, subject teachers and the special educational needs co-ordinator 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 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;