

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

**Subject Inspection in English**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Christian Brothers Secondary School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Mountgarret New Ross Co Wexford
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	63600F

**Date of Inspection: 04-12-2019**



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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.

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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	3 and 4 December 2019
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussions with principal and subject co-ordinator</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during seven lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to individual teachers</li><li>• Feedback to principal and English teaching team</li></ul>

### School context

Christian Brothers Secondary School New Ross is a co-educational school in the trusteeship of the Edmund Rice School Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year programme, and the established Leaving Certificate. Current enrolment is 371.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching of English is good; practice in the lessons observed ranged from very good to fair.
- Students were generally diligent and co-operative, and participated well in learning activities; some very articulate and perceptive contributions were noted.
- Standards of students' written work varied, and this is an area for development.
- Timetable provision for English is generally good, except for some split timetables, and the subject is reasonably well resourced.
- Current planning for English has elements of good practice but there is scope to develop planning for Junior Cycle English and for the assessment of students' work.

#### Recommendations

- When preparing lessons, teachers should ensure that learning materials, activities and sequencing are planned so as to optimise learning experiences.
- Teachers should develop and share success criteria with students, especially for written assignments, to enable them to assess and improve their work.
- School management should endeavour to ensure that timetabling arrangements prioritise what is best for students, and split timetables should be avoided.
- In their collaborative planning, the English department should focus on developing a deeper shared understanding of the Junior Cycle English specification, and on establishing agreed standards for students' work.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Seven lessons were observed covering all years, levels and programmes, and including all teachers in the English department. The overall quality of teaching was good. Some very good teaching approaches were noted, and practice was generally good, but aspects of practice in a few instances were less than satisfactory.
- Strengths were evident in teachers' good relationships with and knowledge of students, their invitational approach promoting student engagement in lessons, and the generally good attention paid to presenting material so that students could grasp and relate to it.
- Areas for development in teachers' practice included aspects of lesson preparation and clarity about the intended learning in some cases, and the sharing of success criteria with students to enable them to assess and to improve their own work on a sound basis.
- Lesson preparation was best where both the materials and the learning activities were carefully planned and the sequence of activities allowed students to deepen their understanding and engagement. Some very good sequencing of tasks was noted that enabled students to read the studied text in increasing depth and detail. However, preparation for some lessons was inadequate and did not enable students to engage purposefully.
- Overall, a good variety of teaching approaches was used. In some lessons, there was quite a lot of teacher talk, but it worked well where it gave students clarity and insight as well as information. This was especially true where teachers allowed their own enthusiasm and interest to come through, as this elicited a more engaged response from students.
- Most lessons provided good opportunities for students to work in pairs or groups, and to be active learners. Some very productive group work was observed where students were very clear about the purpose of the task and the desired outcome. It is important to ensure that students get the full value of both the teacher's and their peers' inputs to these shared learning activities, as good habits of note-making and recording need to be consistently developed.
- The learning environment was at all times supportive and, in a number of lessons, also offered an appropriate level of challenge. For example, in lessons on Shakespearean drama, junior and senior cycle students demonstrated an ability to analyse character and motive perceptively, and senior cycle students spoke the parts very well, and expressed a range of well-argued opinions. Junior cycle students engaged well in activities aimed at developing oral communication skills, and demonstrated a good grasp of the elements of an effective speech.
- A wide variety of ability was evident in most class groups but students were generally diligent and co-operated very well with each other in their learning. Differentiation mostly occurred through teachers giving special attention to students whom they knew might have difficulties with the intended learning. Teachers also paired students strategically to provide peer support, and this was managed well.
- A noteworthy feature of a number of class groups was the presence of very articulate and forthcoming students. It was very good to hear their perceptive and original observations and to note how teachers at times used these as a stimulus to elicit responses from others in the class. It would be worthwhile for the English teachers to consider collectively how these very able students' contributions could be used most productively in the classroom context.

- A sample of students' copybooks and folders showed varied standards of work and presentation, and varied practice in giving formative feedback. The best work was very substantial and carefully presented, but some work was sketchy and poorly organised. In order for standards of written work to improve, students need to know what is acceptable and what is expected of them. Some very good practice involving students redrafting and improving written assignments following feedback was noted in a junior cycle lesson and should be extended.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Timetable provision for English is generally good, both in the number and distribution of lessons across the week. Provision for English in Transition Year consists of one double and one single lesson, which offers students less regular contact with the subject than is desirable. It would be worth considering the provision of three single lessons, or possibly an additional single lesson, for more regular contact with the subject.
- In the case of a number of class groups, the English timetable is split between two teachers, because of job-sharing arrangements and timetable clashes. School management should endeavour to ensure that timetabling arrangements prioritise what is best for the students, and the current situation is far from ideal. Every effort should be made to avoid split timetables next year, and to ensure ongoing shared planning and monitoring of the programme of work for the remainder of 2019/20.
- English is reasonably well resourced, and some good developments, including the expansion of the library, are underway. Most teachers have their own classrooms, and these are pleasant learning environments, although with scope to increase displays of students' work. Many rooms have combined chairs and desks; although teachers and students managed them well, they are not conducive to co-operative classwork, and plans to replace them are timely.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The current English planning folder contains basic schemes of work, outlining content and texts, and includes some planning templates from the junior cycle support service (JCT). It also contains a subject planning statement setting out commendable principles that inform the work of the English department. Meeting records mostly relate to organisational matters, with some reference to sharing good practice. There is significant scope to develop subject planning, building on the elements of good practice noted.
- Records of Junior Cycle subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings give the descriptors assigned but do not record discussion of standards or quality. The English department should focus on developing a deeper shared understanding of the Junior Cycle English specification, and on establishing agreed standards for students' work, which can then be shared meaningfully with students and used in giving formative feedback. Ensuring that students understand the success criteria to apply to a task will enable them to assess their own work and to bring it to a better standard.

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
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;