

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Cnoc Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Granard Co. Longford
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	63730S

Date of Inspection: 11-09-2018



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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

Dates of inspection	11-09-2018
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

Cnoc Mhuire is a voluntary, co-educational secondary school under the trusteeship of CEIST. The school has a current enrolment of 451 students and provides the Junior Certificate, the Junior Cycle Student Award programme, an optional Transition Year (TY), the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Teaching, learning and assessment in the lessons observed ranged from satisfactory to good, while in a minority of lessons there were significant areas for improvement.
- The relationship and interactions among students and teachers were good, supporting a positive learning environment.
- In the best lessons, learning intentions were used to good effect to frame the lesson, engage students and form part of a plenary review so that student learning could be consolidated.
- Maintaining a balance between teacher input and purposeful student activity and efficient use of pair and group work to support student contribution and discussion are areas for development for the English team.
- The school and the English department have engaged with the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service, but there are opportunities to further develop this engagement.
- The subject plan has been diligently prepared but overall there are opportunities to further develop teachers' collective practice.

Recommendations

- Active learning methodologies, specifically co-operative group work, that focus on minimising student passivity and increasing their purposeful contributions, should be prioritised by the English Department.
- Team teaching as an effective method of improving learner outcomes and experiences should be an area for discussion at English team meetings and documented within the subject plan.
- Questioning strategies that facilitate students to develop their critical thinking skills, practice their oral skills and support them in expressing their ideas should be developed by all teachers of English for all year groups.
- A review of the current subject plan is needed, to reflect departmental collaboration, particularly in relation to schemes of work; and a developmental section outlining future planning for improvement, based on meaningful analysis of attainment data and School Self-Evaluation (SSE) topics, should be included.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, the teaching, learning and assessment ranged from satisfactory to good. In the best lessons, learning intentions were used to frame the lesson and were linked with the students' prior learning. Further clarity with regard the learning could have been achieved by referring to the learning intentions as the lesson progressed and by reviewing them at the end so that learning can be consolidated.
- In every lesson visited, very good relationships existed between students and teachers which supported a positive learning environment, further supported by high expectations of teachers for their students.
- Some classrooms had desks arranged in a manner that was conducive to student collaboration and a few classrooms also displayed 'Word-Walls' and other posters that focused on vocabulary development. Consideration should be given to extending these practices across the department.
- In most lessons observed, there was an imbalance between teacher input and purposeful student activity. Students at both junior and senior level should be supported to showcase and share their own learning by engaging in exploratory discussion. One way of achieving this would be a departmental focus on co-operative group work that facilitates students to express and share their ideas in a structured way.
- Team teaching has been introduced recently in the school for the purpose of improving learner outcomes. Effective use of team teaching within the English classroom is an area that should be prioritised for discussion at English team meetings.
- In many lessons, teachers' use of global, lower-order, untargeted questioning elicited minimal student response. Consideration should be given to using questioning strategies that provide opportunities for students to practice their oral skills and encourage critical thinking. This will in turn support students in extended writing tasks.
- Some good examples of extended writing tasks and activities were observed and, in one Junior Cycle lesson, the importance of the student's collection of texts was emphasised. Such emphasis on the writing process should be a focus across all year groups. Students' collection of texts at junior cycle should be a prioritised item for discussion at subject team meetings, with a particular focus on assessment practices.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was mostly used in the context of stationary presentations. Enhanced application of ICT in the context of teaching strategies is an area for development for the English department.
- In most lessons students had an opportunity to read aloud which supported their literacy development.
- In a few lessons, insufficient links were made between students' prior and current learning, particularly in relation to texts that they had studied in primary school. Teachers and students can benefit from taking time to identify what is known about a topic and the department is urged to include ways in which this might be achieved in the subject plan.
- Some good examples of peer assessment were observed in a few lessons. Further consideration should be given to how formative assessment practices might be more consistently applied across all year groups. Developing a homework policy for English team might be helpful in this context.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good subject provision and whole-school support for English.
- The uptake of students at higher level is indicative of the high expectations of students in the English department.
- The English department is now engaging with continuing professional development through the JCT support service. Further engagement with JCT specifically and other areas of continuous professional development such as ICT in teaching and learning and team-teaching would be most beneficial for the team.
- The school has adopted a focus on formative assessment methodologies as part of its engagement with the SSE process. Evidence of the team's engagement with some of the new approaches was not consistent throughout the evaluation. It is recommended that a column be added within the planning documentation to address SSE topics and other areas for improvement.
- The English team actively promotes the subject outside the classroom in many ways, some examples would be the production of an impressive school magazine and organising theatre trips for students. The English team have also expressed their intention to expand and improve the school library.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject plan has been prepared diligently, particularly with regard to planning for junior cycle. However more collaboration is needed regarding schemes of work at both senior and junior level that reflect discussions on methodologies, texts and activities. A section on collection, storage and assessing of the classroom-based assessments should also be included.
- Subject Learning and Assessment Review meetings have been documented but more detail is needed regarding reflections on descriptors. The team are currently in discussion regarding adjustments to traditional assessment practices for second and third year.
- The team have engaged with attainment data from the certificate examinations which is encouraging. However, reflections on how this and other attainment data can be used to inform future planning for improvement should be documented and included in the subject plan.
- TY planning is in need of review to reflect a collaborative approach with regard to topics, texts and innovative teaching methodologies.

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 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;