

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Muire Gan Smál
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Convent Of Mercy Roscommon Town
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65090S

Date of Inspection: 08-02-2018



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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.

SUBJECT INSPECTION

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

Dates of inspection	7 – 8 February 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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil Muire Gan Smál is an all-girls' voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of Catholic Education - An Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). There is a current enrolment of 542 students. The school offers Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the established Leaving Certificate programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good, with some instances of exemplary practice.
- The quality of learning in the lessons observed was very good: student contributions demonstrated knowledge and understanding.
- Assessment practices include high levels of formative feedback; summative assessments at junior cycle include some common elements, however, students do not experience common level-specific summative assessments at senior cycle.
- The subject is very well resourced and supported by senior management.
- The comprehensive TY English programme would benefit from an integrated approach to support tracking of students' progress across modules.
- Very good individual schemes of work were seen; collaborative subject department planning is in need of further development, particularly for junior cycle English.

Recommendations

- Common summative assessments throughout junior cycle and senior cycle should be introduced, as far as practicable, to support teachers' shared understanding of achievement and the tracking of students' progress.
- The subject department plan for junior cycle should be developed to reflect the learning outcomes approach required for the junior cycle English.
- TY students should be encouraged to maintain portfolios of work to demonstrate their achievements and progress across all English TY modules.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good, with some instances of exemplary practice.
- A variety of resources was used in all lessons. Teachers actively encourage students to develop digital literacy skills as an integral part of their learning experience.
- The English teachers are embracing the methodologies required to deliver the junior cycle English programme.
- A very strong emphasis on oral skills development was evident in all of the lessons observed. This focus is mirrored in the junior cycle English programme and is a key element of the school's literacy plan and school improvement plan.
- The quality of learning in the lessons observed was very good and was supported by the clear communication of learning intentions.
- Students were given opportunities to demonstrate knowledge and showed high levels of engagement and understanding in their contributions to class discussions.
- Good quality written work was seen in copybooks and folders.
- Students' work is showcased in all classrooms. This very good practice encourages students to take pride in their work and to develop a sense of responsibility for their own learning.
- The quality of assessment was good.
- Peer assessment was observed in many lessons. Teachers have developed very good practices to support students in this work and to ensure that feedback and comments are thoughtful and respectful.
- Very good formative assessment methods were observed including comments on written work. Commendably, some teachers have devised methods to support students' engagement with feedback. These very good practices reflect teachers' comprehensive subject and pedagogical knowledge and support student development and progress.
- Summative assessments include common elements at junior cycle. However, students do not experience level-specific common summative assessments at senior cycle. Teachers' collaborative practice and the student experience could be enhanced through the development of common summative assessments throughout junior and senior cycle.
- At the time of the inspection, teachers were planning for the organisation and management of the various assessment components of junior cycle English.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support is very good. The subject is very well resourced and supported by senior management.
- A comprehensive support programme is in place for students with special educational needs.
- The school's focus on literacy development is reflected in the allocation of time to specific reading projects in TY and interactions with the local public library service.
- Teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) is supported by senior management and teachers are engaging with CPD programmes for junior cycle.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation at subject department level does not, in some areas, reflect teachers' very good individual practices.
- Commendably, analysis of certificate examination results is carried out by teachers and reflections on these results are included in the subject plan. It would be worthwhile extending this reflective practice to develop an action plan in line with the department's overall objectives for the development of the subject.
- While teachers have embraced the methodologies required to deliver the junior cycle English specification, subject department planning for junior cycle does not reflect the required learning outcomes approach. The subject department plan for junior cycle should be developed to meet the requirements for the junior cycle English specification.
- Currently senior cycle plans are written separately by the teacher of each class group. A collaborative approach that includes information about specific methodologies, assessment tasks for each part of the course and a harmonised teaching programme across the two years should be considered. This would also support the introduction of common level-specific summative assessment at senior cycle.
- While subject teachers share practice through both formal and informal meetings, the subject department plan does not contain records or minutes prior to August 2017. A record of discussion and decisions made at subject department meetings should be maintained as part of the subject plan.
- The TY English programme comprises three consecutive modules, each delivered by a teacher who has a particular interest and specialist knowledge associated with the module. This practice provides a range of valuable learning experiences for the TY students. In the interest of monitoring students' progress, each TY student should be encouraged to maintain a single portfolio of work to demonstrate their achievements and progress across all English modules.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Meánscoil Muire gan Smál Roscommon welcomes the very positive report emanating from the recent English inspection. The report acknowledges the excellent quality of teaching and learning delivered by the teachers in the English department who found the inspection to be a very affirming experience.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board of Management is fully committed to the implementation of the recommendations contained in the report as follows:

The English department is in the process of developing the junior cycle plan to reflect the learning outcomes approach to meet the requirements of the junior cycle English specifications.

A greater collaborative approach is being taken in relation to the drafting of the senior cycle English plan that will support the introduction of common summative assessments at senior cycle.

The English department is cognisant of the need to retain minutes from subject department meetings, as part of the subject plan.

A single portfolio of work will be introduced for transition year students that will reflect their learning, achievements and progress across the various TY English modules.

A literacy plan for English is currently being developed by the English teachers.

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;