

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Strokestown County Roscommon
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65100S

Date of Inspection: 03-05-2018



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agus Scileanna
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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 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.

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	2 & 3 May 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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Scoil Mhuire, Strokestown, is a mixed voluntary secondary school operating under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST). In 2017/18, the school had an enrolment of 530 students comprising 279 boys and 251 girls. The school offers junior cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate (LC) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching observed was good, with some very good practice noted.
- The quality of learning in the lessons observed was very good and students' contributions demonstrated knowledge and understanding.
- The quality of assessment was good and teachers were engaging with the junior cycle assessment strategies including Subject Learning and Assessment Reviews (SLARs).
- Teachers provide supportive and informative oral and written formative feedback to students.
- The overall quality of subject planning is good and reflects the junior cycle English specification; some areas would benefit from further development.
- The comprehensive TY English programme includes a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities and should now be revisited to include a more structured approach to assessment and the monitoring of students' progress.

Recommendations

- Teachers should devise strategic approaches to encourage students to engage with formative feedback and to follow direction for improvement.
- Further development of subject planning should focus on teachers' individual plans as working documents that allow for the recording of progress and reflective commentary.
- TY English should provide for structured assessment of all aspects of the programme and monitoring of students' progress.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching observed was good, with some very good practice noted.
- A very strong emphasis on the development of writing skills was evident in the extensive range of written assignments in students' copybooks. This focus provides a firm foundation for the Collection of Student's Texts which is a key component of junior cycle English.
- A good range of resources including video clips, audio files and worksheets was used in some lessons to enhance students' learning experiences. Consideration could be given to extending the range of resources used, with a particular emphasis on developing students' digital competencies.
- Students' work is showcased in many classrooms and in the school building. 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 learning was very good in the lessons observed; students' contributions demonstrated confidence, knowledge and understanding.
- Oral skills development was a focus in many of the lessons observed in line with required junior cycle learning outcomes. Students were articulate and willing to express and justify differing opinions and points of view.
- The quality of assessment was good; teachers were engaging with the junior cycle assessment strategies including SLARs.
- Peer assessment was observed in many lessons. Teachers have developed very good practices to ensure that peer-to-peer feedback and comments are thoughtful and respectful.
- Formative assessment commentary was seen in copybooks and students reported that comprehensive oral feedback also provides direction for improvement. It would be worthwhile devising strategic approaches to encourage students to take responsibility for engaging with and responding to feedback.
- Common summative assessments are carried out, where appropriate, at junior and senior cycle. This good practice is supported by the subject department's collaborative approach to subject planning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for the subject is very good. The subject is very well resourced and supported by senior management.
- Timetabling and teacher deployment support the concept of the teaching and learning of English as a continuum of knowledge as almost all teachers have a substantial English timetable which includes junior and senior cycle classes.
- Teachers' continuing professional development (CPD) is supported by senior management and teachers are engaging with CPD programmes for junior cycle.
- Students are involved in a number of whole-school initiatives that are supported by English teachers including essay competitions and public speaking events. The production of a weekly newsletter by TY students contributes to their sense of personal responsibility and pride in the school.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of planning is good and the subject plan reflects the learning outcomes approach required for the junior cycle English specification. Senior cycle subject plans provide general guidelines for teaching and assessment in each term. Areas for further enhancement should include the development of teachers' individual plans as working documents that allow for the recording of progress and reflective commentary. This approach would support the subject department's action planning and organic improvement from year to year.
- Commendably, analysis of state examination results is carried out by teachers and reflections on these results are recorded in the subject plan. The subject department's action plan should be informed by this valuable reflective practice.
- While subject teachers share knowledge, information and work practices through both formal and informal meetings, the minutes of meetings are not comprehensive. A record of discussion and decisions made at subject department meetings should be maintained and included in the subject plan to provide a clear history and rationale for the evolution of the department.
- The comprehensive TY English programme includes a wide range of stimulating and challenging activities. Further development of TY assessment practices is recommended, including a student-led approach to progress tracking and monitoring. In this context, students could be encouraged to maintain portfolios of work to demonstrate their achievements and progress.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

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

- Students are being encouraged to engage with formative feedback where feasible.
- Individual plans, including space for reflective commentary, are being developed and implemented.
- The TY programme has been adapted and adjusted to allow for more structured monitoring of students' progress.
- Records of ALL subject discussion now being documented.
- * Future planning will take cognisance of the need to develop and reflect on the organic nature of the subject from term-to-term; year-to-year.

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;