

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Edmund Rice Secondary School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Mount St. Nicholas Carrick-On-Suir Co. Tipperary |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 65270U |

Date of Inspection: 27-11-2019



**An Roinn Oideachais
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 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

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| Date(s) of inspection | 27-11-2019 |
| 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 6 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff |

School context

Edmund Rice Secondary School is an all-boys voluntary secondary school. It has a current enrolment of 296 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, a Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate (Established).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, a very good standard of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed.
- There was a very good balance between teacher and student talk, with very good efforts being made to improve students' oral proficiency.
- Writing was regularly assigned and monitored, with regular teacher feedback provided; further consideration of the department's approach to the collection of the student's texts would be worthwhile.
- Very good learning environments have been developed in teacher base classrooms.
- There is very good subject provision and whole school support with very good timetabled provision for the subject overall; at present, only two periods are provided for English lessons in TY.
- Very good work has been undertaken in the area of planning and preparation; there is scope to further underpin the use of an integrated approach to the language and literature elements of the course, along with the use of learning outcomes in Junior Cycle.

Recommendations

- The English department should include a section in the department plan explicitly setting out the department's collective policy and practice with regard to the development of the collection of the student's texts in Junior Cycle.
- Explicit planning for an integrated approach to the language and literature elements of the course should be included in the subject department plan.
- The school should increase the number of timetabled lessons for English in TY.
- Some adjustments should be made to the common schemes of work in Junior Cycle, in the context of growing experience of the new English specification.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, a very good standard of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed. Classroom management was of a very good standard. Clarity with regard to the learning to be undertaken was provided in all lessons observed.
- ICT was used appropriately in English lessons to support student learning. In addition, the school is currently developing its use of a digital platform which is supporting the movement of teacher planning to a digital environment and is improving communication. In the context of this very good work and the school's overarching planning for digital learning, the provision of visualisers for English classrooms, where practicable and within the constraints of resources, should be advanced. Visualisers will support teacher modelling of skills as well as the explicit teaching of assessment in English.
- Reading was a frequent feature of English lessons. Teachers provided students with effective models of reading, while students themselves often took part in reading activities. This was managed in a sensitive manner by teachers. In other lessons, worthwhile use of DARTS (Directed Activities Related to Texts), including text-marking and prediction, was observed. In a number of lessons, the adoption of a guided reading approach would have been worthwhile, so that student comprehension could be further supported through the explicit teaching of this comprehension skill. The department is encouraged to link with a local primary school as a means of establishing continuity with students' experiences of reading and other skills.
- There was a very good balance of talk between teachers and students, with explicit efforts being made to develop students' oral proficiency. The use of group work was a ubiquitous element in English lessons. Students responded very well, with exercises engaged with diligently and with a degree of enjoyment. In the context of very good work in this area, it is suggested that the potential to harness cooperative learning activities as a means of providing wait time for students in accessing prior learning might usefully be further deployed.
- Writing was regularly assigned and monitored, with regular teacher feedback provided. The student's collection of texts was being developed in English lessons, although there is an opportunity to standardise and build on good practice already extant. To address this, it is recommended that the English department should include a section in the department plan explicitly setting out the department's collective policy and practice in this area. This should incorporate the utilisation of different feedback modes to students, student action arising from feedback, and the development of a collection of texts in first year. Beyond this, it is recommended that the department should include explicit planning for an integrated approach to the language and literature elements of the junior and senior cycle courses through the use of intervention exercises, in the subject department plan.
- Very good learning environments had been developed in teacher base classrooms, with seating arrangements, which were supportive of effective practices, and displays to support student learning.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good subject provision and whole school support overall. The school timetable provides very good timetabled support for the subject in all year groups, apart from TY where the subject is timetabled for two lessons. It is recommended that the school should increase the number of timetabled lessons for English in this year group.

- Classes are organised on a mixed ability basis in first year and in second year, while decisions with regard to levels to be undertaken by students are taken in third year. The maintenance of an approach where students decide on their levels as late as possible in third year is encouraged. In addition, the potential for mixed ability groups to be maintained for the duration of Junior Cycle should be considered, dependent on the context of particular student cohorts.
- Rotation of levels and cycles between teachers has recently been agreed. This is a very important development, ensuring the maintenance of key skill sets across the subject department.
- The school has incorporated a strong focus on literacy development as part of its own school self-evaluation (SSE). In particular, a focus on the expansion of students' wordconsciousness was evident in English classrooms. The English plan has a consistent focus on SSE, with a very good section developing a disciplinary focus on the overall whole-school improvement targets.
- A very good class library has been developed in one English classroom with the support of the parents' council. In addition, the department has links with the local library and promotes reading for pleasure through a Drop Everything and Read (DEAR) initiative.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Very good work has been undertaken in the area of planning and preparation. The subject department plan is very good and exemplifies a thoughtful and effective approach to collective planning over the last number of years. Of particular note is the inclusion of a departmental action plan for English. It is very positive that the subject department recognises the key place the plan will have in ensuring an effective induction process for new teachers in the coming years.
- Common schemes of work have been developed over the last number of years. Senior schemes of work are very well-developed. Good work has been done on schemes of work for Junior Cycle. It is recommended that some adjustments be made in this area, particularly in the context of growing experience of the new English specification. This should incorporate limiting the number of learning outcomes assigned to each unit, along with, potentially, the further translation of learning outcomes into the key learning to be achieved in a particular period. In addition, the explicit setting out of specific assessments during and at the end of units of work, aligned with the key learning to be achieved should be advanced.
- There is a very worthwhile TY programme, including a strong focus on the development of key genre exercises. All of these elements support a logical transition from the new Junior Cycle curriculum. It is suggested that an explicit focus on a collection of texts as an element in students' grades in TY would be a logical extension of current very good practice in the planning of the programme.

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 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; |

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board is very happy with the content of the report and hopes to move forward by considering the recommendations in light of our current structures/resources in the school.

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

- 1) The school will move to increase the number of timetabled lessons for English in TY.
- 2) We hope to get visualisers for the same English classes and other subjects/finances allowing.
- 3) We were very impressed with the information provided on the use of co-operative learning and would hope to do whole staff training on it in the near future.