

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Rockwell College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Cashel Co Tipperary
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65300D

Date of Inspection: 21-10-2016



WHAT IS A 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. Learning, teaching 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 DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	20 & 21 October
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 5 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Rockwell College is a co-educational fee-paying secondary school with a current enrolment of 480 students. The school is a Holy Ghost school under the trusteeship of the Spiritan Education Trust. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate (Established).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Teaching and learning was good or very good in lessons observed.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used frequently and effectively in lessons observed.
- Print-rich environments have been developed in most English classrooms.
- A good level of practice was observed in the area of assessment.
- Overall, there is good whole-school support for English.
- There is significant scope for development in the area of subject-departmental planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should support a sustained focus for continuing professional development (CPD) in the English department.
- Action in specified areas is required to improve the subject department plan.
- Recommendations with regard to compliance and improvement in the area of junior cycle English contained in the body of this report should be addressed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teaching and learning was very good or good overall, with two examples of very good practice and three examples of good practice. Teachers' expertise in their subject area was frequently evident. There was a clear structure in all lessons and pacing was managed well in almost all instances. Where this could have been improved, a move from a question-answer-feedback format to the use of other questioning or co-operative learning strategies would have been

worthwhile. Where questioning was observed, there was a very good emphasis on higher-order questioning and maintaining high expectations with regard to student responses.

- ICT was used effectively in lessons. It is suggested that management could support the English department through the provision of visualisers in English rooms, where practicable. The school's own network is used to communicate resources to students in the English department. With this good practice in mind, the place of a virtual learning environment as a further support for the study of English could be considered.
- Pairwork, groupwork and scaffolded independent work by students were utilised frequently in lessons observed. These approaches worked well in all cases. Further possibilities in the development of teachers' practice in this area might be considered through the exploration of how such groups might be organised to maximise the key elements of wait time and accountability. All teachers should explore the practice of utilising group and pair work in order to support student ownership and autonomy in their learning.
- Teachers used pre-reading, guided reading and other approaches to support student comprehension. In the context of the new junior cycle English specification, it may be worth exploring the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies as part of an English departmental meeting. This sharing of practice could highlight how English teachers approach this area to support students' reading skills.
- Print-rich environments have been developed in most English classrooms, incorporating the display of interesting vocabulary, as well as motivational posters relevant to English. This is good practice and should be adopted across the English department.
- A good level of practice was observed in the area of assessment. Formative feedback forms a part of teachers' practice and there were examples of good and very good practice in this area, including rapid feedback to a whole-class group, oral feedback to individual students and the use of codes in written feedback. In developing practice, the formulation of clear learning intentions, success criteria and peer-assessment and self-assessment should be considered. Overall, students' written work observed during the evaluation was of a very good standard. The department is encouraged to pursue the adoption of the collection of the student's texts as a useful assessment mode in students' summative assessments in first year. Uptake levels of higher level English are very good and student achievement in English is very good.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, there is good whole-school support for English. There is good provision for English overall on the school timetable. Timetabled provision for English in fifth year and in sixth year is very good with six lessons per week for each class group. In other year groups, timetabled provision is adequate with four lessons per week for junior cycle class groups and three lessons per week in TY. In the case of a small number of classes in first and second year, some consideration might be given to achieving the maximum spread of lessons across the week rather than the provision of two lessons on some days.
- A whole-school literacy plan has been developed. This has incorporated a number of actions aimed at improving students' dispositions towards reading as well as a focus on vocabulary. A further area which is worth exploring in the English department, through the subject-planning process, is the adoption of a focus on the twenty-two learning outcomes linked to the primary school curriculum in first year.
- English teachers have participated in a number of CPD opportunities in the last number of years. As a further addition to these arrangements, it is recommended that the school should consider the development of a sustained focus for CPD. This could support strategic priorities,

not alone in the English department, but potentially in the wider school. An area which may be worth considering in the current context is co-operative learning.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- A subject co-ordinator is in place and a subject plan has been developed. The plan includes some elements of common planning and appropriately uses the prescribed texts for both junior cycle and senior cycle. However, plans are currently not time-linked and are largely content-based. A number of actions are required to improve subject planning. These include: a move to a unit-based approach to planning in junior cycle; the use of learning outcomes from the English specification to focus unit planning in junior cycle, along with an outcomes-based approach in senior cycle; and the linking of common schemes of work to specific timeframes in both junior and senior cycle.
- Teachers have not conducted the first Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA1) in English in accordance with the advice provided in the Specification for Junior Cycle English (2015). In addition, no subject learning and review (SLAR) meeting has taken place. The reason for this was reported to be industrial action. In order to ensure that students benefit from the full range of learning experiences as outlined in the English specification and required by Circular 0024/2016, it is recommended that teachers implement all aspects of the English specification, including Classroom-Based Assessments. Furthermore, teachers should engage in SLAR meetings after the CBAs have been completed in order to build a common understanding of the quality of student learning and to quality assure the assessment of students' work as outlined in the Framework for Junior Cycle, 2015. Finally, the development of the collection of the student's texts to meet the requirements for the second Classroom-Based Assessment (CBA2) should be begun with some urgency in second and third year.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and the subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation. The board accepts the report as the final inspection report available for publication and wished to respond formally to the report. The Board agrees that the response submitted will be included as an appendix to the published report. The board's response is submitted below.

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 in 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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the findings of the English Inspection report and it thanks the Inspectorate for noting the very good practice in operation across the subject.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

Rockwell College will continue its promotion of CPD across its staff. Action on improving the subject department plan has commenced also. In relation to the recommendations noted in respect of Junior Cycle English, the Board is not in a position to address this until the current ASTI action is resolved.