

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Loreto Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Coleville Rd, Clonmel, Co Tipperary.
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	65330M

Date of Inspection: 22-01-2020



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

Dates of inspection	21 and 22 January 2020
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 and relevant staff

School context

Loreto Secondary School is an all-girls voluntary secondary school. The school offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). There is a current enrolment of 492 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, a good standard of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed; some examples of an integrated approach to the language and literature aspects of the courses were in evidence.
- Very good work is underway in the area of information and communications technology (ICT).
- Written work was regularly assigned and monitored and key genres to be explored have been agreed; in some junior cycle classes students had not undertaken work on the collection of the student's texts during their second-year studies.
- Very good examples of formative, comment-based assessment were observed in a number of lessons; a limited range of feedback modes was utilised across the department.
- Overall, there is very good support for provision and whole school support for the subject.
- Good work has been undertaken in organising subject department plans and resources, but overall, improvement is needed in a number of areas.

Recommendations

- The use of an integrated approach to the language and literature elements of the courses should be explicitly highlighted and consistently incorporated in planning for junior cycle and senior cycle classes.
- The development of effective feedback modes which place responsibility for action on students should be pursued as a key element in developing student writing.
- In the context of planning for the new junior cycle specification, action is required to substantially adjust the current schemes of work.
- The collection of the student's texts should be planned for and implemented in second year for all class groups, as is required by the assessment specification for English.
- The study of a novel should be incorporated into planning and practice for first-year class groups, as is advised by the specification.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, a good standard of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed during the evaluation. This included a number of very good lessons. In a number of lessons where a need for improvement was identified, this focused on the effective deployment of co-operative learning activities, a need to consolidate learning, and the assignment of extended writing activities with appropriate feedback.
- Good relationships were evident between students and teachers. Clarity with regard to the learning underway was frequently provided through the use of learning intentions in lessons. This was most effective where teachers focused on the skill being pursued, explicitly highlighted this for students, and used the learning intention to check in on learning during and at the end of the lesson. This good practice should be extended across the department.
- Very good work is underway in the area of information and communications technology (ICT). Teachers are provided with tablet devices which support their pedagogy, assessment, and planning. The potential for ICT to support collective planning has been grasped through the development of a well-organised digital area for English department planning. In addition, teachers used ICT effectively throughout the evaluation as a worthwhile support for student learning.
- Group work and pair work were used regularly in lessons. This often worked well, with students very engaged by the tasks set. In instances where such work might be further developed, the adoption of structured co-operative learning activities was advised so that student wait time could be maximised, along with the potential for teachers' formative assessment. In one instance, where there was a need for a greater balance between teacher and student talk, the incorporation of such co-operative learning activities was recommended.
- Written work was regularly assigned and monitored. In a number of lessons there were very good examples of extended writing activities, and this included the collection of the student's texts in Junior Cycle. The extension of this approach across the department should be pursued, particularly, but not exclusively, through the collection of the student's texts. Examples of an integrated approach to the teaching of skills were seen during the evaluation. In this context, it is recommended that the use of an integrated approach to the language and literature elements of the courses should be explicitly highlighted and consistently incorporated in planning for junior Cycle and senior cycle classes.
- Very good examples of formative, comment-based assessment were observed in a number of lessons and this approach should be adopted across the department. In this context, it is recommended that the development of effective feedback modes which place responsibility for action on students should be pursued as a key element in developing student writing.
- There were a number of very good and good learning environments which had been developed in classrooms observed during the evaluation. These included examples of excellent practice. Where opportunities for further development presented in this context, the potential to expand students' wordconsciousness through a focus on subject-specific words and other new vocabulary should be pursued.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, there is very good support for the subject on the school timetable.
- The school has developed a very good assessment calendar and accompanying policy with regard to the classroom-based assessments in junior cycle. This includes a requirement that the Assessment Task (AT) should be completed within one week of the relevant CBA. It is advised that the English department should incorporate this approach into its practice in the future. In the context of the continuing development of junior cycle assessment, the school is encouraged to continue to review its practice in the context of student needs.
- A number of class sets of novels have been purchased to support students' reading for pleasure. In addition, the school environment incorporates a number of displays linked to reading and the subject, English. Class libraries have also been developed to support students' engagement with reading for pleasure.
- The school has adopted a two-fold focus in the area of school self-evaluation, incorporating students' wellbeing, and teachers' collective practice through the use of digital technologies. There has been worthwhile work on both of these areas within the English department.
- Digital technology has also underpinned very good work in organising data, initiatives, and resources to support students with difficulties in literacy development at a whole-school level.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- While good work has been done in organising subject department plans and resources, overall, improvement is needed in a number of areas. Overall, individual lessons were effectively planned.
- However, in the context of planning for the new junior cycle specification, action is required to substantially adjust the current schemes of work. Currently, there is a lack of clarity with regard to the learning and assessment to be undertaken in units of work, with assessment not aligned with the learning identified. In addition, there is a need to eliminate elements of the plan which are unnecessarily repetitive. There is a need to audit the plan to ensure all learning outcomes relevant to each year of the specification are explored. The department should translate learning outcomes selected in each unit into a brief summary of key learning to be achieved in order to support communication and consideration across the department. In addition, the planning of assessment should be undertaken at the same time as planning for learning, incorporating clear and specific assessment tasks, thus ensuring the alignment of learning and assessment in the plan.
- In the context of the student's collection of texts in junior cycle, it is positive that the department has agreed key genres to be explored. However, in some junior cycle classes students had not undertaken work on the collection of the student's texts during their second year studies. In this context, it is recommended that the collection should be incorporated as part of students' work in second year for all class groups, as is required by the assessment specification for English. In addition, it is suggested that, to further support students' transition from primary school, the incorporation of a collection of texts in teachers' work with first year classes would also be worthwhile. Beyond this, it is recommended that the study of a novel should be incorporated into planning and practice for all first-year class groups, as is advised by the specification.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the 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

n/a

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 accepts the recommendations and in the context of the recommendation in relation to bullet point 3, planning at Junior Cycle is at an advanced stage for the 2020—21 school year.