

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Le Cheile Secondary School |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Hollystown Road Tyrellstown Dublin 15 |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 68083N |

Date of Inspection: 06-12-2017



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. 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

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| Date of inspection | 06-12-2017 |
| 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

Le Chéile Secondary School, Tyrellstown is a co-educational, voluntary secondary school. The school opened in 2014 and has a current enrolment of 459 students. The school currently offers the Junior Certificate, an optional Transition Year (TY) and year one of the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of the teaching and learning in the majority of the lessons observed ranged from good to very good, with instances of excellent practice evident in some lessons. There were a minority of lessons that had scope for improvement.
- All classrooms visited displayed interesting and attractive print-rich environments that celebrated students' achievement and promoted the subject.
- While there were some good examples of differentiated teaching methodologies and learning tasks in some lessons, this was not consistent across the department.
- Given the student cohort of the school, greater emphasis should be placed on language development.
- The subject plan is indicative of the diligence of the English team.

Recommendations

- Students should have more opportunities to work collaboratively and to share and showcase their own learning.
- Teachers should collectively develop strategies to develop higher-order, critical-thinking skills in all English lessons.
- A consistent approach to the recording, assignment, presenting and monitoring of homework should be developed.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed varied. In the majority of lessons it was either good or very good and there were instances of excellent practice evident in those. A few lessons had scope for improvement.
- The classroom atmosphere was conducive to learning in all lessons. Attractive and stimulating learning environments were observed with subject-specific posters that promoted the subject and displays of students' work that celebrated their achievement. Desks were arranged in a way that was conducive to student collaboration.
- A very high level of teacher planning and preparation was evident in most of the lessons observed.
- Learning intentions were outlined at the outset of all lessons. Best practice was seen where planned learning intentions were expressed in terms of student learning and were revisited to assess attainment. This practice should be extended to all lessons.
- A good rapport between teachers and students was evident and students co-operated well with each other and with their teachers.
- The effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) to engage students and support their learning was observed frequently during the evaluation.
- Teachers used a range of methodologies to engage students including short starter activities and extension tasks.
- In the best lessons, teachers selected learning tasks that were relevant to students' own lives. Wider use of this approach in all lessons in English is encouraged.
- Clearly defined and structured tasks allowed students to achieve at a variety of levels in some lessons. In other lessons, more support and scaffolding was needed to facilitate learning. All students should be enabled to attain the required outcomes through carefully planned differentiation.
- Students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. Very good practice was observed where students chose their own learning task from a selection of post-it notes displayed around the classroom.
- In some lessons, teachers modelled good learning for students by providing them with criteria for success and models of what good learning looks like.
- While there were examples of pair and group work in the lessons observed, in general, students should be given more opportunities to work collaboratively. A structured and co-operative approach to group work would support and facilitate students to discuss and respond to material, thereby refining their understanding of learning objectives.
- In general, students need more practice with extended writing pieces. Some students will require scaffolds such as graphic organisers, mind-maps and vocabulary banks to support them in their learning.
- In most lessons, lower order questioning to assess knowledge was used to good effect.
- In the majority of lessons, opportunities to develop critical-thinking skills were missed. Higher-order questions to elicit longer answers are needed so students can engage more deeply with their learning. Structured group work with a specific timeframe and ample time set aside for feedback can support students to do this.

- Homework is assigned by teachers and some students have a lot of work in their copybooks. In other lessons, feedback is given electronically in different formats. In the context of providing all students with regular, constructive and meaningful comments on their work, the department should develop, at subject team level, a uniform system of how students present and store their homework assignments and how feedback is given. This could include a combination of online and written feedback.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The subject is very well supported by senior management.
- Given that English is a second language for a significant proportion of the school's cohort, a stronger focus on the enrichment of students' vocabulary should be prioritised in all lessons. This could be done by focusing on subject-specific vocabulary, and the integration of word banks and starter phrases for discussing texts across different genres. It is encouraging that plans to provide in-class support for students for whom English is not a first language are already in progress.
- The school has engaged well with literacy development and initiatives are in place to develop and encourage reading in the school. The library, currently a work in progress, will support and enhance these initiatives.
- A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities enhances the learning experience for students' such as the school's Literacy Week, the debating club and drama group.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The English teachers are a collaborative team, evidenced in their regular meetings, common assessment practices, shared resources, and detailed planning.
- The English plan has been diligently prepared and this is indicative of the dedication of the English team. Teachers have included useful reflective commentary in their schemes of work. Some minor adjustments and modifications are needed in both senior and junior cycle schemes. Reviewing available online resources such as Junior Cycle for Teachers would support planning for first-year, second-year and third-year schemes of work.
- Subject team meetings and subject learning and review (SLAR) meetings should be appropriately documented.
- TY planning should, where at all possible, avoid utilising texts and course sections that are on the curriculum of the Leaving Certificate.
- Commendably, self-evaluation and reflection are already in place in the department but a more focused analysis is encouraged. This can be achieved by using learner outcomes in certificate and summative examinations to inform planning and setting clear, measurable targets for improvement. Action planning for continuous improvement should be included in subject department meetings.

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.

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 of Le Chéile Secondary School welcomes the many positive observations made by the Inspector during the recent Subject Inspection in English. In particular, it was noted that the atmosphere in the class was conducive to learning and the learning environment is attractive and stimulating. We also commend the teachers on their very high level of teacher planning and preparation and the way teachers employ a wide range of resources and methodologies. The Board is especially pleased that the report notes that there is a good rapport between teachers and students and that students are encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning. The Board also notes the commendation of the English department for their self evaluation and reflection.

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

The department have received and engaged with JCT training and are reviewing plans to ensure that this is reflected therein. This will involve developing strategies to ensure students are using higher order, critical-thinking skills in all English classes. Student collaboration and showcasing of learning is also part of this implementation of Junior Cycle reform.

A whole school assessment and homework policy is being developed.