

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Cork Educate Together Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	C/O Griffith College Wellington Road Cork
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	68263P

Date of Inspection: 02-04-2019



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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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	1 and 2 April 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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Cork Educate Together Secondary School is a newly established co-educational school under the trusteeship of Educate Together. There are 188 students enrolled in the school's Junior Cycle programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- Overall, a very good standard of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed during the evaluation.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used effectively; potential for further development exists in this area.
- Very good practice in the teaching of writing skills was observed, while additional possibilities for the deployment of the collection of the student's texts are evident.
- Teachers provided very good feedback regarding student work but the range of feedback modes utilised was limited.
- There is very good whole-school provision and support.
- While planning and preparation is good overall, the English department plan is very wide-ranging and would benefit from being more focussed.

Recommendations

- A visualiser should be provided for the English base classroom to support teachers in the modelling of writing and of English assessment skills.
- The English department should further develop its approach to the student's collection of texts, incorporating it as a key summative assessment tool in planning for each year group.
- A wider range of assessment modes should be developed, delineated in the subject plan, and employed, with a particular focus on the enhancement of students' English assessment capability.
- The English subject plan should be adjusted and refined with a focus on the key learning to be achieved and the assessment of this learning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, a very good standard of teaching, learning, and assessment was observed during the evaluation. Where areas for development were identified in one lesson, these focused on the pacing of the lesson and time management, along with the potential for co-operative learning to be incorporated in the lesson structure.
- Lessons were conducted in a supportive, respectful atmosphere. Clarity with regard to the learning to be achieved was evident in all lessons.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used effectively. The use of a virtual learning environment is a core part of the department's day-to-day practice. In this context, it is recommended that a visualiser should be provided for the English base classroom, when practicable, and within the limits of available resources. This will support the modelling of writing in English lessons by teachers, as well as the explicit teaching of assessment skills for English.
- Generally, there was a good balance between student and teacher talk in lessons. Where oral language was best supported, this included very effective use of group work and co-operative learning strategies to support the development of exploratory talk. On occasion, where an overemphasis on teacher questioning developed, the balance of talk was less effective. This could have been better supported through the incorporation of co-operative learning at key points in the lesson.
- English lessons incorporated very good work on the analysis of language and writing techniques in poetry and in other genres. In addition, reading of both visual and written texts featured prominently in some lessons. In this context, some discussion within the department with regard to the place of Directed Activities Related to Texts (DARTs) to support comprehension, as well as approaches to reading aloud in the classroom, could be worthwhile.
- Very good practice in the teaching and learning of writing skills was observed. In particular, the provision of teacher models in one lesson was most positive, alongside a brief critique of the writing presented. A particular feature of writing approaches used was the adoption of intervention exercises linked to the texts being studied. This was positive and should be emphasised in any review of summative assessment tasks linked to the collection of texts in the English subject plan.
- In the context of very good work already underway, the English department should now move to adjust its approach to the student's collection of texts. Currently, pieces from the collection are used as part of the school's trimester assessments. However, there is an opportunity to further harness the collection as a support for students' understanding of the craft of English writing. A collection of texts should be begun in first year, and should continue in the other years of Junior Cycle. It should be incorporated as a key summative assessment tool in the planning of each unit of work in English, supporting rich assessment tasks linked to the essential learning at the end of, or during, each particular unit of work.
- Teachers provided students with very good feedback on their work. This included written commentary as well as formative feedback during classroom exercises. In this context, the department should consider, delineate, and employ a wider range of feedback modes to support the development of students' assessment capability over time. This should include the explicit modelling of assessment to support students' understanding of standard and to

feed into peer and self-assessment. Key to each of these approaches should be the incorporation of student action arising from feedback.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school provision and support. Timetabled provision for the subject is very good. Students are organised in mixed-ability classes for all year groups, as is appropriate.
- Comprehensive transition arrangements are in place to support student transfer from primary school. As an addition to these arrangements, the potential for the English department to be provided with further training regarding the appropriate use of standardised reading scores should be explored. In addition, an explicit curricular link with students' primary schools and prior learning experiences should be developed.
- Very good work is underway in using cross-curricular, co-curricular, and extra-curricular opportunities to enhance students' experiences of the subject. In this context, especially good work has been undertaken in developing school library services.
- The school has chosen oral language development as a focus for its work in the area of school self-evaluation. This is positive and the English department has worked to develop this area.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is good planning and preparation overall. Lessons were almost all well-planned. The English department has met a number of times during the year and minutes have been recorded of these meetings.
- A diligent, carefully thought out subject plan has been developed. This incorporates a very wide range of items, including numerous cross-curricular elements. A core document seeks to support teachers in engaging with the cross-curricular ethos of the school. In the context of this work, the English department should now move to adjust and refine the plan, producing a more focused, bespoke plan for English. Key items to address include the adoption of theme-based units to support planning across the school's trimesters, further refining of the key learning outcomes to be addressed in each unit and the alignment of specific summative assessments with these learning outcomes. Key items to address also include a clear definition of the learning to be achieved through the school's phenomenon-based learning (PBL) cross-curricular programme, the elimination of unnecessary areas of cross-curricular commentary, and the consolidation of key areas as part of the plan.
- An important element of the subject plan should be a teacher induction policy for English, setting out essential elements of the department's practice and incorporating classroom observation as part of new teachers' induction. This is of particular importance in light of the expected rapid expansion of the subject team over the next few years.

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;