

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

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| Ainm na scoile / School name | Deansrath Community College |
| Seoladh na scoile / School address | New Nangor Road Clondalkin Dublin 22 |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 70040H |

Date of Inspection: 20-02-2018



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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| Dates of inspection | 20-02-2018 |
| 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 8 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff |

School context

Deansrath Community College, operates under the trusteeship of the Dublin and Dún Laoghaire Education and Training Board (DDLETB). It is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 293 students. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Skills action plan for educational inclusion. The school offers the Junior Certificate (JC), the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the established Leaving Certificate (LC), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The school has recently offered an optional transition year (TY).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- While the overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the majority of lesson, there was scope for improvement in a significant minority.
- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were respectful and positive in all lessons observed.
- In the best lessons there was a balance between teacher input and purposeful student activity.
- Pair-work was often used in lessons but there were few instances of effective group-work.
- Team-teaching as a means of addressing the diversity of learners needs is not fully optimised.
- A strategic whole school plan (DEIS) for worthwhile short-term literacy interventions is in place.

Recommendations

- Group work, as a collaborative learning strategy, should be more widely used as a means of facilitating students to share and showcase their own learning.
- The provision of continuous professional development in the area of team-teaching should be provided for teachers of English.
- The planning and implementing of in-class interventions for the improvement of literacy should take place.
- The subject plan requires adjustments and developments.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- While the overall quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good, in the majority of lessons, there was scope for improvement in a significant minority. In the best lessons, teaching strategies were used that engaged students and allowed them autonomy in their learning.
- The quality of learning was either good or very good in the majority of lessons. In the lessons that had scope for improvement, the content and learning tasks planned by the teacher did not match the needs of the students and the desired learning outcomes for all students were not achieved.
- Encouragingly, in most lessons, learning intentions were displayed and shared with students. In one lesson the learning intentions had been differentiated and in another, students were given an opportunity to review them. Extending these good practices across the department is recommended.
- Interactions among students and between students and teachers were respectful and positive in all lessons visited.
- Many teachers in the English department ensured the provision of a print rich environment in their classrooms that promoted the subject and celebrated students' work. A few teachers had arranged the desks in a way that was conducive to supporting students' collaborative learning. These practices are also worthy of widespread extension to all English classrooms.
- Teachers sharing their own enthusiasm for and enjoyment of the subject featured in many lessons, which supported student engagement.
- In many lessons there was an imbalance between teacher input and productive student activity. Teachers should endeavour to offer students more opportunities to be active and, where possible, independent in their learning.
- Though students had some opportunity to work together, often in pairs, learning was not always optimised, either because students needed scaffolding to support them in completing the task or the task itself required more structure. Consequently, the department should consider ways to improve collaborative learning among students, such as cooperative group work.
- In the best lessons, teachers purposefully linked lesson topics to aspects of the students' own lives; thereby ensuring a positive impact on student engagement and supporting their enjoyment of the subject.
- In a number of lessons, good use of visuals was made to support student learning either by including visuals on slide presentations or by incorporating video clips in lessons. These practices are worth extending across all year groups and programmes.
- Some good examples of short, lower order questioning were observed to assess learning. The use of the 'lollipop stick' strategy is encouraged across the department to avoid chorus answering and to ensure all students have an opportunity to contribute to the lesson. More widespread use of higher-order questioning for the purpose of developing critical thinking skills, particularly in relation to discussion on texts, is encouraged.
- Some good examples of formative feedback in samples of students' copybooks were observed but this was not always consistent. Consequently, teachers of English should develop a

system, at team level, where students can receive regular and developmental feedback on their written work.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling for the subject is appropriate.
- Worthy whole school literacy interventions such as a paired reading programme, a vocabulary enrichment programme and a debating module, form part of the school's DEIS planning for improvement. However, the planning and implementation of long-term, in-class strategies for the improvement of literacy at both junior and senior levels is recommended.
- Team-teaching is an established form of in-class support in the school but in the team-teaching lessons observed, learning was not always optimised and often, did not meet the diverse learning needs of all students. The provision of whole school continuous professional development (CPD) in this area is urged and reflections on shared teaching approaches should take place at team-level meetings.
- Commendable cross-curricular and co-curricular supports are in place to promote the subject, such as writing competitions, theatre and cinema visits and visitors to the school such as story tellers and poets.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The English department is collaborative, evidenced by the rotating position of co-ordinator, sharing resources and common exams.
- A comprehensive subject plan has been developed and the English department has engaged with planning for junior cycle English. As a further development on work already undertaken, some adjustments to the plan should be considered. A tabular approach to schemes of work should be undertaken, where assessment tasks, resources and teaching methodologies are clearly aligned with learning outcomes, in the timeframe of available weeks per term.
- A Transition Year (TY) plan has been developed. This includes imaginative and worthwhile modules which are supportive of the further development of students' skills in English.
- Encouragingly, certificate examination results are reviewed annually. To build on this good practice, discussion and analysis of how this data and data from summative examinations can impact teaching and learning methodologies and inform future planning for improvement, should be documented.
- Teachers recognise that continuing professional development is important to their work and the team has engaged actively and productively with continuous professional development.
- A forum for sharing expertise in areas of teaching and learning has recently been initiated in the school. Continuing with this worthy practice and developing it to include professional collaborative review is encouraged.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

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 Deansrath Community College welcomes the findings of this report, which in many cases affirms the high standards traditionally set by the English department.

The report has underlined the enthusiasm and professionalism of teachers along with the collaborative nature of the work being carried out by the English department.

The respectful and positive interactions between students and teachers referenced in this report is especially welcomed and in line with the mission statement of the college.

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 English department welcome this report as an important tool to assist in the future planning and development of the subject in the college.

Since the inspection there has been whole-school training on differentiated teaching and learning with a focus on group work. This practice is currently being embedded across all subject departments.

Continuous professional development in the area of team teaching has been planned for teachers of all subjects to address the diverse needs of our students. An in-school survey has already been carried out exploring team-teaching and information from this could support future practice.

A number of whole-school and classroom based literacy interventions continue to take place and again, in line with current practice, will be reviewed and evaluated at the end of the school year.

The use of collaborative learning strategies has been discussed at departmental level and it has been agreed that these will be linked to the learning outcomes in the schemes of work/subject plan.