

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Curragh Post-Primary School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	McSwiney Road Curragh Co Kildare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	706600

Date of Inspection: 24-01-2018



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
4. Child protection

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

Dates of inspection	24-01-2018
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

The Curragh Post Primary School is a co-educational school operating under the aegis of Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board. The school participates in the Delivery Equality of Opportunity in our Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school offers the Junior Certificate, the Junior Cycle Award, the established Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The current enrolment is 154 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very mixed, generally ranging from good to fair, though in a few lessons there were instances of very good practice.
- In a minority of lessons, learning was compromised by a sequence of tasks and activities that was not contextualised to the learning needs of the students.
- In general, interactions among students and teachers were respectful; thereby supporting a positive learning environment.
- Some good development of literacy skills was evident in the lessons observed.
- Given the context of significant varying levels of ability in the student cohort, all classes of English would benefit from the inclusion of team-teaching to support student learning.
- Increasing the uptake of English at higher-level in the certificate examinations has been identified as a target for improvement by the team.

Recommendations

- Learning Intentions should be student focused, explicitly shared and reviewed at the end so that learning is consolidated.
- Lesson tasks and activities should be carefully structured and differentiated to facilitate the learning outcomes for all students.
- A model of in-class support, such as team-teaching should be implemented to ensure the learning needs of all students are met.
- To maximise the effectiveness of collaborative learning among students, a carefully structured and co-operative approach to group-work is recommended.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The teachers of English are a dedicated and hardworking group who are interested in developing the subject in the school.
- The quality of teaching was varied and ranged from very good to fair. Where teaching was very good, teachers identified and prepared in advance, resources and learning tasks that were suitable for the specific learning intention of the lesson and for the learning needs of the class. In a minority of lessons, the learning tasks and resources chosen did not meet the needs of the students.
- The quality of learning was also mixed and ranged from good to fair. In the best lessons, learning intentions were student-focused, clearly communicated and reviewed at the end of the lesson for the purpose of consolidating learning.
- Interpersonal relations in the classroom were generally good, students were affirmed and interactions between students and teachers were respectful which supported learning.
- In all classrooms visited, the desk arrangement was conducive to student collaboration.
- In some lessons, students did not achieve the learning intentions and therefore, teachers are encouraged to meaningfully differentiate content and learning activities in order to cater for the varying needs and abilities of students. Moreover, differentiated strategies such as providing additional work for the more able students should be included in lesson planning.
- Given the varying learning needs of the student cohort, consideration should be given to implementing a system of in-class support, such as team-teaching which is already taking place in other areas of the school.
- In lessons where students' learning was optimised, explicit links were made between the learning material and the students' own lives. Students would benefit from the extension of this strategy across all programmes.
- In many lessons, the emphasis on key words supported students' literacy development.
- While students are being given opportunities to write, more practice is needed with longer writing tasks. In some instances it may be necessary to scaffold students' writing with mind-maps, key-word lists, subject –specific vocabulary and graphic organisers. The sharing of success criteria would further support the writing process.
- Active learning methodologies including group and pair work were used in most lessons. However, in a number of lessons, further scaffolding and more detailed preplanning was needed to support the learning and engagement of all students. Adequate time set aside for student feedback would maximise the effectiveness of group-work.
- In some lessons, there was an imbalance between teacher input and student activity which compromised student engagement in their learning. All teachers should consider strategies that offer students opportunities to share and showcase their own learning.
- Some very good examples of lower order, targeted questions to assess learning were observed.
- Some helpful in-class review of homework was also observed and some class groups received developmental, meaningful written feedback on their work. In order to facilitate a more consistent approach to formative feedback, a homework policy should be developed at team level that links with the whole-school homework policy.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for English is good in all curricular programmes and the subject is well represented on the timetable.
- The subject is strongly supported by senior management.
- There is a clear commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) on the part of all members of the team and a number of areas of expertise are being developed for the purpose of improving practice in the classroom.
- Commendably, members of the English department organise a number of co-curricular and extracurricular activities such as theatre trips, World Book Day and Reading Week. The addition of a reading competition among junior cycle students would be a worthy addition to these.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The English department is a hardworking team that has come through a period of change in the school and team members are dedicated to the improvement of learning outcomes in the subject.
- The team operates collaboratively as evidenced in the engagement in subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) meetings, in sharing resources and in the comprehensive subject plan. Some modification within the subject plan is required such as a tabular approach to schemes of work at both junior and senior levels. Learning outcomes, themes (for junior cycle), teaching methodologies and relevant assessment practices should be included in the framework of available weeks in the term. A worthy consideration would be the inclusion of a column indicating the DEIS targets for literacy development.
- To support the range of abilities in classes, it is advised that the department engages in more detailed planning for differentiated resources (such as audio-books, graphic organisers and other visual supports) and for differentiated methodologies such as structured co-operative learning and team-teaching support.
- In the context of planning for improvement, the team has carried out some analysis of the data from summative and certificate examinations and commendably, increasing the numbers of students taking higher level in the certificate examinations has already been identified by the team as a key target for improvement. Details of how this target can be achieved should be documented in the subject plan.
- Given the areas of expertise within the team (such as team-teaching and vocabulary enrichment), consideration should be given to a collaborative team review of teaching and learning practice
- In many lessons observed, students' copybooks and notes were in poor condition or missing. Teachers of English should agree a common folder/copy system for students, to help them organise and retain their work.
- The school has engaged with literacy development and has a number of strategies in place to encourage reading for pleasure such as Word of the week and the celebration of World Book Day.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

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 in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. The principal confirmed that all teachers have been made aware that they are mandated persons and that they have 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 and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

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.

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;