

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Ballinode Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Clarion Road Ballinode Sligo County Sligo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	72360M

Date of Inspection: 25-10-2018



**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 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	24 and 25 October 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 six class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Ballinode Community College is a co-educational school in Sligo that operates under the auspices of Mayo, Sligo & Leitrim Education and Training Board, with a current enrolment of 163 post-primary students, comprising 96 boys and 67 girls. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school provides the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Junior Cycle (JC) programme, the Leaving Certificate (LC), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good.
- The quality of learning in the lessons observed was good overall; there were opportunities to provide more challenge for students in some lessons.
- The quality of in-class assessment was very good; the development of the whole-school policy on assessment, as recommended in the whole-school evaluation-management, leadership and learning (WSE-MLL) in January 2014, would strengthen the subject department's efforts to extend very good assessment practices to all areas of students' learning and assessment of progress.
- In many lessons, digital learning technology was well integrated and students used tablet devices purposefully to progress their learning.
- Subject provision and whole-school support are good.
- The quality of planning and preparation is very good; teachers' reflective engagement with improvement at subject department level and in individual schemes of work is exemplary.

Recommendations

- High expectations should be extended to all students in all lessons and particular attention should be paid to expectations around the completion, presentation and extent of written work.
- Opportunities for students to develop oral and critical thinking skills should be integrated into lesson planning, at every opportunity, from first year onwards.
- The whole-school policy on assessment should be developed as recommended in the WSE-MLL in January 2014 and be used to support and enhance the English subject department's subject-specific assessment and homework strategies.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

- The quality of teaching in the lessons observed was very good; active learning methodologies were used very effectively and teachers were sensitive to the needs of their students.
- Lessons were very well planned and included a variety of resources to support students' learning. In many lessons, digital learning technology was well integrated and students used tablet devices purposefully to progress their learning.
- Students with special educational needs are supported through differentiated teaching and in-class support. The learning support co-ordinator ensures that students' needs are known to teachers at the beginning of each school year and provides guidance and assistance throughout the year. The school has introduced some team-teaching initiatives in other subject areas.
- The quality of learning in the lessons observed was good overall. Students engaged purposefully in very well-planned and carefully constructed learning activities and had a clear understanding of what was expected of them.
- In some lessons, teachers set high expectations for students' achievement and students responded well. In other lessons, there was less challenge for students and expectations were limited. High expectations should be extended to all students in all lessons and particular attention should be paid to expectations around the completion, presentation and extent of written work. It is commendable that the English department's key objectives include the improvement of writing skills and encouraging students to write longer answers to questions.
- In many lessons, students were encouraged to discuss and reflect on the texts they were studying. Some students were very confident and fluent; others were less fluent and found it difficult to make connections, speculate about possible outcomes and make predictions. Opportunities for students to develop oral skills should be integrated into lesson planning, at every opportunity, from first year onwards.
- The quality of in-class assessment was very good. Directed and differentiated questioning was used in many lessons to help students develop understanding and to support teachers in assessing the progress of learning and the impact of teaching.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons. However, it was reported by teachers, and was evident from examination of some students' copybooks, that homework is not routinely completed by all students. In addition, it was evident from the examination of some students' copybooks and folders that the amount of written work completed by students in the same class group differed and that presentation standards varied. The development of the whole-school policy on assessment, as recommended in the WSE-MLL in January 2014, would strengthen the subject department's efforts to implement improvement in this area.
- Subject learning and review (SLAR) reports show that teachers have evolved very good practices that include providing feedback for improvement to students for each classroom-based assessment (CBA); commencing the collection of texts early in second year; and encouraging students to include a variety of genres in the collection.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Subject provision and whole-school support for the subject a good. School management supports and encourages teachers to attend continuing professional development (CPD) events and to progress their own learning.
- Timetabling provision is adequate and meets the minimum curricular requirements at junior and senior cycle. It is good that two general studies periods provided under the JCSP umbrella in first year are dedicated to the development of literacy and numeracy skills.
- Concurrent timetabling in second and third year and throughout senior cycle allows for transfer between classes, if needed. It is commendable that this approach to timetabling provides opportunities for a modular approach to teaching the curriculum, team teaching, whole-year group activities such as debates and focused revision workshops.
- It is good practice that teachers take both senior and junior cycle classes and rotate between higher and ordinary level where relevant.
- Mixed ability class groups are formed in first year. Traditionally, students are assigned to higher-level and ordinary-level classes for the remainder of the junior cycle. However, in the interest of supporting student learning experiences and outcomes and in light of the JC English programme, teachers have maintained mixed-ability groupings for the current second-year students. During the inspection, the teachers indicated that they will consider continuing the mixed-ability class groups throughout junior cycle. This approach is commended.
- The teachers of English support students' learning experiences through a range of extra-curricular activities such as the JCSP drama initiative, the make-a-book project, theatre trips and an LCA activity day at a local radio station. It was reported that these activities have had a positive impact on students' engagement with English. Teachers' commitment to expanding students' experiences is highly commended.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning and preparation is very good. The subject plans contains general information about the subject department and plans for each year group. The level of reflective commentary seen in individual teachers' schemes of work was exemplary.
- Minutes from subject department meetings record discussion and decisions over the past number of years. It is commendable that the English teachers have developed an action plan for improvement and have set clear and time-bound objectives. It is positive that the focus for school self-evaluation complements the continuing work of the English department in the areas of collaboration and improving the learner experience.
- Analysis of state examination exam results is undertaken. Further development of this good practice could include identifying trends over a number of years and reflecting on whether factors such as subject planning, approaches to teaching and learning, class group formation can be associated with improvement or dis-improvement. Tracking of the progress of individual students as they progress through the school may also assist in the identification of areas for improvement.

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;