

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Castletroy College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Newtown Castletroy County Limerick
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	76073G

Date of Inspection: 12-02-2019



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agus Scileanna
Department of
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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

Date(s) of inspection	12-02-2019
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 nine class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principals and relevant staff

School context

Castletroy College is a designated community college, where the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB) is the patron, with the Roman Catholic diocese of Limerick as a trustee partner. It is co-educational and the time of the inspection enrolment stood at 1,209 students. It offers the Junior Cycle programme, an optional Transition Year programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and the Leaving Certificate.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The standard of teaching and learning was of a very high quality.
- Highly effective practice was seen in all lessons where learning intentions and success criteria brought clarity to student learning and where teachers encouraged students to reflect on learning.
- Overall, assessment practices were very good; the deeper embedding of written formative feedback would further support student writing.
- Co-operative learning was generally well structured; a greater development would further nurture academic classroom talk.
- Whole-school support and provision are very good overall, however, grouping strategies for class formation require revision.
- The quality of planning and preparation was very good; a highly effective system of instructional leadership is in place which promotes collaboration around teaching practice.

Recommendations

- In building on the good practices evident in teaching and learning, teachers should further develop the policy for written formative feedback.
- As a means of building on established strengths, teachers should now prioritise opportunities for developing classroom talk through co-operative learning.
- Grouping strategies for class formation should be revised to ensure equity of access to the English curriculum.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The standard of teaching seen was of a very high quality. Teachers demonstrated significant subject knowledge and classroom management was consistently affirming and inclusive.
- In all lessons observed, teachers supported student learning very effectively through the sharing of learning intentions and eliciting of existing student knowledge. Highly effective practice was seen in many instances where the learning intention and tasks were judiciously aligned to support student learning. In one highly commendable instance, reflection on a previous lesson allowed students to identify individual writing tasks; here, the personalised pathways promoted student ownership of assessment and learning.
- Instances of appropriate peer-assessment were seen while digital learning technologies also enhanced learning processes in some lessons. For example, the collation of online student responses in a junior-cycle lesson enabled whole-class feedback on work submitted. Overall, a broader embedding of formative feedback practices to further develop student writing would be beneficial. The implementation of a strategy encompassing a broad range of assessment approaches focused on student action and improvement should be agreed.
- Literacy and vocabulary development were supported effectively in many lessons through the development of student word banks. Highly effective practice was seen in instances where students were asked to research, define and use new words in a sentence as a means of progressing through different stages of word knowledge.
- Questioning was used very effectively by teachers to support and assess student learning. Examples included the use of think-pair-share, and asking students to expand and clarify their ideas, or the ideas of others. In such instances, questioning was a very effective instrument for sustaining engagement and deepening student understanding.
- Highly effective practice was seen in all lessons where teachers encouraged students to reflect on learning. The use of exit tickets was a persistent part of practice, which developed further the school-wide engagement with metacognition and students thinking about how they learn. In the most effective instances, teachers also checked-in on learning during lessons, facilitating teaching that was responsive to emerging learning needs.
- Many instances of co-operative learning were seen. In all cases, group work was effectively structured and guided by teachers; students also articulated their enjoyment of such activities. In the most effective instances, students engaged in learning activities which effectively developed key skills and deepened subject knowledge.
- In the majority of lessons, the primary conversational dynamic was teacher-student. As a means of building on established strengths, consideration should be given to the further development of academic student talk through the greater use of complex co-operative learning tasks. Collaborative structures, such as the jigsaw strategy, which require students to read, discuss, and explain content to peers have the potential to promote higher-order thinking while combining group responsibility with individual accountability.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support structures are of an exceptionally high standard. A highly effective system of instructional leadership sees curriculum leaders support link teachers who, in

turn, support subject departments. This practice fosters a culture of collaboration very successfully and ensures consistent communication regarding teaching, learning and assessment. It is supported by a developed process of data gathering.

- There is good whole-school provision overall, and an orderly learning environment is a notable characteristic of the school. Timetable design seeks to provide a strategic allocation for English lessons in all year groups and it is highly commendable that additional English enrichment classes are provided. However, the school should revise its practice of forming some smaller English classes, as such groupings can constrict the subject specification's expectation that the English classroom is a place of 'classroom talk' where students have a wide and varied experience of texts that stimulate, engage, inspire and challenge them.
- Teachers provide a significant range of extra and co-curricular supports for the development of English related-skills and dispositions. Students attend creative writing workshops, the school debating team is led by teachers and trips to the theatre and bookstores are organised annually.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is highly effective. A subject specific action plan integrates with the school self-evaluation action plan. The subject plan includes targets, actions and review. Whole-school initiatives of setting learning intentions and success criteria for classes, encouraging students to reflect on learning, and the collaborative planning of units of work have been implemented very successfully.
- Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) reports indicate effective collaborative moderation and some reflections on practice. The roles of link teacher, SLAR facilitator, subject co-ordinator, and curriculum leader rotate regularly: a process which effectively supports the development and support of instructional leadership.
- The recent introduction of a digital platform has facilitated the effective sharing of resources and will provide a significant support for teachers when completed. There is considerable professional capacity within the English department. The continued development of its internal roles, organisational structures, and the possibilities for common and collective lesson planning has the potential to harness this further. The introduction of groups with responsibilities for subject-specific areas such as assessment, key skills, or schemes/resources for a year-group would have the potential to benefit teaching, learning and wellbeing.
- Schemes of work are well developed and include key learning statements and key words for terms. Discussions with teachers revealed that they are keen to continue the excellent work they have done in developing the key learning statements, and this is to be encouraged. This work can also identify opportunities for a greater range of assessment modes and for extended writing exercises that will support the development of student portfolios generally, and CBA2, the Collection of Texts, in particular.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals 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;