

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Larkin Community College
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Champions Avenue Dublin 1
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	760770

Date of Inspection: 13-09-2019



**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	12 & 13 September 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 five lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Larkin Community College is a co-educational post-primary school under the auspices of the City of Dublin Education and Training Board, with a current enrolment of 386 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied and the Leaving Certificate. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education and Skills' action plan for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall.
- Teachers used a good variety of methods and resources to support learning; in some lessons there was scope to provide more opportunities for students to increase their autonomy as learners.
- Subject provision and whole school support is very good, with teachers facilitating students to engage in a range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities that extend their experience of English.
- The JCSP library provides students with a valuable range of additional learning opportunities related to the study of English and overall literacy development.
- It is very good practice that the teachers have developed an action plan for the department with clearly defined goals and targets that complement the school's DEIS plan and targets.
- Subject planning is of a good standard with common schemes of work having been developed; there is scope to include more detail to inform teaching, learning and assessment.

Recommendations

- Opportunities for students to take responsibility for their own learning and to increase their autonomy as learners should be included in all lessons.
- Schemes of work should be further developed to include all required learning outcomes and to link them to appropriate assessment tasks.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- Lessons were very well planned. In many lessons, students' learning experiences were enhanced by careful selection of materials to support and engage learners. A range of active learning methodologies was used including pair and group work and role plays. In a few lessons, there was scope to extend the range of resources used and to consider the pairing and grouping of students strategically, with a view to meeting all students' learning needs.
- In many lessons, students demonstrated confidence and fluency in oral responses to questions and in discussion. There was less evidence of well-developed reading comprehension skills. All opportunities to engage orally with written texts as well as with concepts and ideas should be exploited.
- The Special Educational Needs (SEN) co-ordinators ensure that students' needs are known to teachers at the beginning of the school year and provide guidance and assistance throughout the school year.
- A differentiated approach to teaching and support for individual students was used to promote attainment in all lessons.
- In most lessons, there were high expectations of students in terms of engagement and learner outcomes. Very good practice was observed where students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning through co-constructing success criteria, responding critically to texts, forming their own opinions, and developing their own notes thereby increasing their effectiveness as learners. Opportunities for students to develop as autonomous learners should be included in all lessons.
- Overall, the learning environment supported positive learner experiences. In some classrooms, the arrangement of desks was conducive to a collaborative approach to learning and assessment and there was some evidence of displays of students' work that affirmed and celebrated students' achievements. It would be worthwhile considering how the learning environment can be used to promote high quality learning experiences for all students.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons and was well integrated with the lesson content.
- In some instances, there was evidence of insightful formative feedback on written work and students commented on its usefulness in helping them to improve through the process of drafting and re-drafting. Subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) reports show that teachers have valued this developmental approach to skills development.
- Good-quality work was seen in some copybooks; however, the standard of presentation of written work varied widely. To support the development of students' skills and practices in this area, the school should consider the development and implementation of agreed whole-school standards.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The overall quality of subject provision and whole-school support for the subject is very good and timetabling provision is appropriate. All lessons are timetabled for 60 minutes and the time was well-used in the lessons observed.

- Deployment of teachers is effective. Teachers take senior and junior cycle lessons and rotate between higher and ordinary level where relevant. This is good practice as it enables teachers and students to benefit from the learning that teachers gain from a range of teaching experiences.
- The board and senior management encourage and support all teachers to engage in continuing professional development.
- In junior cycle, first and second year class groups are mixed ability. In third year, students are split between higher and ordinary level. In the interest of supporting high expectations for student learning, and in light of the continuum of knowledge and skills development that is inherent in the Junior Cycle English specification, teachers should consider maintaining mixed-ability groupings throughout junior cycle.
- TY classes are mixed ability. In fifth year, higher-level and ordinary-level class group formation is based on TY and junior cycle achievement, teachers' professional judgement and student preference.
- Teachers facilitate students to engage in a range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities that extend their experience of English including access to a "writer in residence", writing competitions, work with theatre groups, an active book club and creative writing workshops. The JCSP library also provides students with a valuable range of additional learning opportunities related to the study of English.
- The Vocabulary Enrichment Programme (VEP), as mediated by the National Council for Special Education (NCSE), has been adopted by the school and is being used to drive literacy development for first and second year students.

4. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The quality of planning is good overall.
- It is very good practice that the teachers have developed an action plan for the department with clearly defined goals and targets that complement the school's DEIS plan and targets. Evaluating the impact of the actions and setting new goals and targets should be key elements of the department's ongoing development strategy.
- Common schemes of work have been developed for junior cycle English; this is good practice. Further work is now needed to ensure that all learning outcomes, including those prescribed for first year, are addressed and that specific assessment modes and tasks are associated with learning outcomes. In addition, it would be useful to link activities and tasks arising from the VEP explicitly with specific learning outcomes. The inclusion of teachers' reflective commentary that will serve to inform the future development of schemes of works would also be beneficial.
- Teachers have developed good procedures for the development of the Collection of the Students' Texts. Consideration could now be given to using individual folders or portfolios throughout second and third year; and including a comprehensive range of genres with some pieces of extended writing.
- The TY scheme of work outlines a portfolio approach for assessing and collecting work done during the year. Students should be encouraged to take responsibility for monitoring their own progress in completing tasks throughout the year. It would be worthwhile requiring all TY students to complete extended pieces of writing with a view to developing and extending subject-specific skills.

- Analysis of state examination results is undertaken. Further development of this good practice should include identifying trends over a number of years and reflecting on the impact of factors such as attendance, approaches to teaching and learning and class group formation. Tracking of the progress of individual students through junior and senior cycle 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, deputy 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;