

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Mohill Community College
County Leitrim
Roll number: 76089V

Date of inspection: 10 May 2012



A N R O I N N | D E P A R T M E N T O F
O I D E A C H A I S | E D U C A T I O N
A G U S S C I L E A N N A | A N D S K I L L S

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	10 May 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teachers• 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 teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was good.
- Students' learning was monitored and a stimulating learning environment was created.
- Assessment practice is good but there is no written school homework or assessment policy.
- Attainment is good and positive trends were noted; students are encouraged to achieve their potential.
- Planning is good on the whole. Areas for development are identification of priorities for action, greater focus on learning outcomes and documented planning and assessment in the areas of speaking and listening.
- Whole-school support is good in a number of areas.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Learning outcomes should be clearly communicated to students at the start of classes and resources used should promote learning.
 - Differentiation should be practised in all aspects of teaching and learning.
 - Action planning for improvement should be a focus for future planning; there should be planning for all syllabus skills, including speaking and listening.
 - More lessons should be allocated to English in the junior cycle in order to develop literacy skills and the school should develop an assessment policy.
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INTRODUCTION

Mohill Community College has an enrolment of 351 students, 188 girls and 163 boys. It provides the following programmes: the established Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), an optional Transition Year (TY) and the Junior Certificate programme. The school has an Autism classroom.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed was good overall.
- There was evidence of very effective lesson preparation and planning in many cases. Good practice was observed where learning intentions were shared. To develop this further, a reasonable, achievable number of learning outcomes, framed as “can do” statements should be written on the board at the outset of the lesson and reviewed at the end both to ensure that the learning goals have been achieved and to maintain the lesson’s focus.
- Resources were well chosen and used effectively in most lessons. In some, opportunities for use of stimulus material in the form of visual materials should be fully exploited. In a small number of lessons, there was scope for more creativity in the selection of resources to meet the needs of all learners.
- In most lessons, varied activities were planned to engage students in learning. Questioning strategy was good in most cases. In the best lessons, group work facilitated collaborative learning with a focus on the development of higher-order skills, analysis and synthesis. Useful techniques such as application of graphic organisers helped students to order and use information. In a small minority, methods deployed were not appropriate to the students.
- There was an appropriate focus on language development and the extension of students’ vocabulary. Pre-teaching of vocabulary through keywords supported literacy development in some cases. This is good practice.
- In a very good lesson, language and literature were integrated. In a small number of cases, there was evidence of fragmentation; this is not conducive to concept development and promotion of deeper appreciation of language as per the syllabuses.
- In a lesson observed, writing frames were used to support students who found mastery of this skill challenging and this is commended. Good practice should be disseminated. There should be more focus on writing in a variety of genres and for different audiences in all lessons. In a very small minority, there was no evidence of sustained writing assignments; the quality of practice tasks was poor and unlikely to improve student writing proficiency.
- In most lessons, written homework was regularly assigned and corrected. Written teacher developmental feedback helped direct learning and positive comments motivated efforts. Written homework was not routinely assigned in a small minority.
- Good practice in the area of folder management was observed. There is a commendable expectation that students maintain high standards in the presentation of their written work in many lessons.
- Classroom atmosphere was conducive to learning. Students received a high level of teacher support. They were affirmed in their efforts.

- In most lessons, students demonstrated a good knowledge and understanding of their coursework. Attainment is good and positive trends were noted; students are encouraged to achieve their potential.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school support is good in a number of areas. Resources are good and teachers are classroom based. The school has a library.
- Timetabling provision for Junior Certificate is lower than might be expected given the need to develop literacy skills. Allocation for Leaving Certificate is above average; it is in line with syllabus requirements in the LCA. It is recommended that the number of English lessons be increased in each year of the junior cycle.
- Students are taught in mixed-ability groups in first year and are assigned to higher and ordinary-level classes in second and third year based on end-of-year assessment. It is understood that common papers are set. Uptake of higher-level English is good. Strong consideration should be given to mixed-ability grouping in each year of the junior cycle.
- Co-curricular and extracurricular activities enrich students' experience of English. Students participate in public speaking and writing competitions, and attend the cinema and theatre. Good learning opportunities are generated in TY, for example, a cross-generational TY story-telling project; a TY communications project involving visits to the autism classroom; an enterprise project linked to provision of books for the school library. Teachers of sixth year developed a visual literacy module. There is good liaison with the learning-support department. A drama workshop was held for a small group of special educational needs students.
- There has been some whole-school focus on continuing professional development (CPD) for example, special educational needs and differentiation in 2007 and in 2009, teaching and learning in the context of whole-school evaluation. The area of differentiation in all aspects of teaching and learning needs to be revisited. It is suggested that a strategic plan for CPD be drawn up based on an analysis of teachers' needs and the school's future developmental priorities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Structures are in place to support collaborative planning. The role of subject co-ordinator is rotated. A common plan for each programme based on syllabus requirements is in place. Action planning for improvement should inform future endeavour. Planning should be framed in terms of learning outcomes to be achieved across the four skill sets.
- While there are good assessment practices in place, there is a need to develop planning in this area. Assessment of oral communication should be included in the range of modes documented. There is no written school homework or assessment policy and this should be addressed.
- Teachers encourage reading and some bring classes to the library. However, the department should develop a reading policy which is consistently implemented and fully integrated into all planning for the subject. The department should ensure that the number and range of texts being studied in the junior cycle are sufficient to meet all syllabus

requirements. A survey of texts studied in the feeder primary schools should also be considered.

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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.