

**Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in English**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	Naas Community College
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	Craddockstown Naas Co. Kildare
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	76194S

**Date of Inspection: 31-01-2018**



**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

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

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	30 + 31-01-2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 4 class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

Naas Community College is a co-educational, multi-denominational post-primary school that opened in August 2015. The school operates under the auspices of Kildare and Wicklow Education and Training Board. The school has now three year groups and has a current enrolment of 266 students.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning was generally good and there were instances of very good practice frequently in evidence in the lessons observed.  
A wide variety of teaching methodologies was used in all lessons that supported student engagement in their learning and the creative use of information and communications technology (ICT) was enhanced by the impressive teacher-created content.
- Some good examples of oral feedback were observed in lessons while the area of written formative feedback on students' written work is an area for development.
- In first year, classes are mixed ability; from the beginning of second year, they are banded for English, Irish and Maths according to ability and movement within bands is facilitated.
- The English team are actively involved in the whole-school collaborative peer review system which seeks to improve student learning and encourage professional dialogue.

#### Recommendations

- Lesson tasks and activities should be carefully structured and differentiated to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes for all students.
- Students should receive regular and developmental feedback on their written work so that improvement can be facilitated.
- The organisation and implementation of a system of in-class support for students with special educational needs should be prioritised in English lessons, particularly in the context of how classes are organised after first year.
- In the interests of developing the potential of all students, teachers should consider maintaining mixed-ability class groups throughout the junior cycle.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Teaching is generally good in the school and instances of very good practice were frequently in evidence in the lessons observed.
- The quality of learning in the majority of the lessons was good. Student learning was compromised where the differentiation of learning tasks did not take place and the support required for students with specific needs was not in place.
- In the majority of lessons, students were motivated to learn because the learning intentions of the lesson were attainable and shared with students. In the best lesson, learning intentions were student focused, referred to as the lesson progressed and time was set aside at the end for review and for consolidating learning. The extension of such good practices across the department is encouraged.
- In all lessons observed, a wide variety of teaching methodologies facilitated and supported student engagement in their learning.
- In all classrooms visited, interactions among teachers and students were respectful and students were affirmed, thereby ensuring a supportive learning environment.
- Students were given opportunities to work collaboratively and some very good examples of active learning methodologies were observed. In some instances, further scaffolding was needed to support the learning and engagement of all students. Consequently, lesson tasks should be carefully structured and differentiated to facilitate the achievement of the learning outcomes of the lesson.
- Moreover, to enhance students' active learning experiences, tasks should facilitate students to share and demonstrate their own learning during the lesson. This could be achieved by allowing students sufficient time for discussion during group-work and to feedback findings to the class.
- In most lessons, teachers had high expectations of students. This has particular relevance in the context of the banding in English that takes place after first year. In the interests of developing the potential of all students, teachers should consider maintaining mixed-ability class groups throughout the junior cycle.
- In the majority of lessons, teachers' own enthusiasm for the subject and subject knowledge encouraged and facilitated student engagement.
- In all lessons visited, the use of information and communications technology (ICT) was used to good effect and was enhanced by the impressive teacher-created content available to students.
- In a few lessons, good examples of formative assessment practice were observed where students were encouraged to evaluate and improve their own work. In some instances the process of peer-marking could be scaffolded for weaker students by offering them visual supports outlining the success criteria for the task.
- Good in-class monitoring of homework was observed in all lessons. However, many students' copybooks were in poor condition and consequently, teachers of English should agree a common folder/copy system for students to help them organise and retain their work.

- Written formative feedback on students' work is an area for development. It is recommended that students are given regular, meaningful and developmental feedback on their homework to encourage and develop improvement.
- Teachers use a range of questioning techniques effectively, particularly lower-order questions to assess understanding. For the purposes of facilitating a deeper engagement with the lesson, critical thinking should be encouraged and developed by supporting and scaffolding group discussions.
- Teachers purposefully develop relevant literacy skills by focusing on keywords, by mirroring reading practices and by holding a DEAR class every week. Commendably, a paired-reading programme with a local primary school has been developed and is planned on an annual basis.

## **2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Provision for English is good and the use of ICT in teaching and learning is actively promoted.
- The senior management team works to promote a learning culture, evidenced in their support for reflective process, the hosting of teaching and learning breakfasts, and the facilitating of collaborative review practices.
- First-year students are taught in mixed ability groups and are subsequently banded for Maths, English and Irish at the end of the year. In the interests of developing the potential of all students, teachers should consider maintaining mixed-ability for as long as possible.
- In the context of English lessons, a system of in-class support, such as team-teaching, should be agreed and implemented to support students with additional needs.
- For the purpose of enabling students to make meaningful links between lesson materials and areas outside the classroom, the team has developed very good cross and co-curricular activities such as trips to the theatre and the cinema, links with the local library, hosting a weekly book-club and debating club.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The English teachers are a collaborative team evidenced in the comprehensive subject plan, the sharing of resources through an online database and the use of informal and formal meeting time to reflect together on their work.
- The subject-plan requires some modifications such as a tabular lay-out to the schemes of work in available weeks, with the learning outcomes in the new junior cycle English specification as a key focus. These should be linked with assessment practices and teaching methodologies. In addition, arrangements to support oral communication and the collection of students' texts should be set out in the plan. Given the context of a growing English department, the inclusion of a section on a mentor system for new teachers is encouraged.
- Commendably, the English team engages in constructive collaborative review practices as part of a whole-school endeavour that actively promotes the improvement of student learning.
- The team recognises that continuous professional development is intrinsic to their work and some team members have embraced strategies of instructional leadership in their teaching.

#### **4. CHILD PROTECTION**

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

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 near the main door of the school / in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy / Child Safeguarding Statement (*delete as relevant*) in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their 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, deputy principal and most subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

## 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 quality of the school's provision in each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> 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
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> 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
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> 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
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> 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;

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

This school welcomes the inspection report and in particular the comment that “instances of very high quality were frequently in evidence.” We also welcome the praise in relation to departmental cooperation and teacher generated content.

Recommendations 3 and 4 relate to the provision of support for students with Specific Needs in the context of English classes. The school feels that the current arrangement and staffing of these classes militates towards success, for all students, far more than any mixed ability arrangement posited.

The overall context is pertinent, as students with specific need have an IEP and access to Educational Support from the teacher who is delivering the relevant banded class.

We strongly feel that this continuity of approach adds greater flexibility of support. Additionally, the context of mixed ability in every other subject, except Maths and Irish, mitigates the implicit suggestion of marginalisation.

## **Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

- (1) Whole School training and workshops around Education Support and differentiation will be organised for the next academic year; coupled with a review of subject plans in this context.
- (2) Staff training, especially in light of the requirements of the JCA, is planned in the area of formative feedback and assessment.
- (3) The school believes that the current banding arrangement is the most effective manner of delivery of this subject in second and third year. We believe that the current arrangement has the most likely chance of the most beneficial outcome for all students. We note that the JCA allows for Common level in all but three subjects, with that in mind, we feel that a banding arrangement is both appropriate and beneficial to all students.  
This arrangement allows for a situation where the vast majority of students are taught in a Higher Level class in a de facto mixed ability setting. This arrangement further allows us to create a much smaller Ordinary Level class where students with specific learning difficulties will have the benefit of a vastly reduced Pupil Teacher Ratio. In that context, the school does not envisage a change.