

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Caimin's Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Tullyvarraga Shannon County Clare
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	914471

Date of Inspection: 14-11-2018



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 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.

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	13 and 14-11-2018
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Caimin's Community School is a co-educational school operating under the trusteeship of the Bishop of Killaloe and the Limerick and Clare Education and Training Board (LCETB). The school provides all programmes including an optional Transition Year (TY). Enrolment currently stands at 741 students.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The teachers of English work very hard and in a reflective manner, they are open to learning from each other and have engaged very well with changes in practice to implement learner-centred approaches to subject delivery.
- The overall quality of teaching and learning is high; practice was very good in the majority of lessons observed and was good in almost all other lessons.
- Very effective negotiation and sharing of success criteria with students, promotion of a process approach to writing from first year, and feedback approaches have been agreed as collective practice, with excellent implementation noted in some lessons.
- Whole-school support for the subject is very good.
- The overall quality of collaborative planning and preparation is good, with some excellent practices established; formal departmental sharing of class group plans and of expertise on particular aspects of the subject is at an early stage of development.

Recommendations

- Ongoing, formal sharing of expertise on particular aspects of the subject and of class group plans on the school's shared online platform now need to be established as part of regular departmental practice.
- Over the coming years, a departmental plan needs to be agreed for senior cycle English, building on the senior cycle plans that have been developed and implemented by individual teachers.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning is high; practice was very good in the majority of lessons observed and was good in almost all other lessons.
- Students were engaged and purposeful in almost all lessons. In the best lessons students spoke confidently; asked questions of teachers to clarify their understanding of texts; offered insightful and well-supported perspectives on texts; and offered valid, constructive feedback on the work of others.
- The negotiation and sharing of success criteria supported student learning in written and oral tasks in many lessons, as well as supporting peer and teacher feedback. This was very high quality practice.
- Very high levels of uptake at higher level in both junior and senior cycle English were noted, with very good learner outcomes achieved in state examinations.
- Students' confidence and skills in oral presentations were being developed through an agreed, incremental approach. To support students' achievement in relation to other oral learning outcomes, it is encouraged that communicative approaches and listening exercises be formally discussed and shared at subject department meetings.
- The English department's collective agreement this year in relation to feedback approaches is in line with best practice. Expertise exists within the department to lead the implementation of this approach and regular peer sharing of progress is advised to consolidate this practice.
- Students' wellbeing and positive attitudes toward reading are supported by daily break-time opportunities to borrow books from the school library, and by a structured, personal target-focused first-year reading initiative. To maximise the impact of the first-year reading initiative, it is recommended that an explicit module of teacher instruction and modelling in relation to comprehension strategies be provided before the reading initiative. Practices currently in use by individual teachers should be shared and a collective approach to comprehension teaching should be agreed.
- A whole-school policy of continuous assessment for all year groups was introduced for the 2018/19 school year. As a result, collective assessment tasks for all half-term units of learning have been agreed by the teachers of English, ranging across writing, speaking and reading tasks. Students are now led to accumulate written work reflecting different genres from first year onward, with feedback to support redrafting and improvement. This promotion of a process approach to writing in junior, TY, and senior cycle classes is excellent practice.
- The teachers' professionalism and very diligent work will facilitate future steps to support even higher student writing outcomes. This may be achieved by agreeing collective approaches to the management of student material for the collection of texts and to encouraging students to submit some texts electronically, to make redrafting a more purposeful learning activity.
- A number of effective differentiation practices were noted in many lessons. To enhance those practices, it is advised that more scaffolds and graphic organisers to support the study of prescribed texts be gathered electronically and made available to students. Regularly

mixing students for pair/group assignments will provide an additional differentiation support, allowing students to engage with a range of peer responses.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good whole-school support and provision for English. Senior management and the parents' association facilitate the acquisition of additional books for the school library on request. Timetable provision is in line with syllabus requirements, and senior management has implemented requests from the English department in relation to aspects of senior cycle English timetabling and to teacher continuity from first to third year.
- Over the years, the teachers of English have made changes to class formation, particularly at senior cycle, to promote higher-level uptake. Such action planning for improved subject delivery is highly commended.
- Most teachers of English have their own base room and good work has been done in developing stimulating learning environments in these base classrooms.
- The department is using the school's new online platform to share resources, to upload meeting minutes, and has begun uploading departmental planning materials. Also, devices are available to the English teachers to support the recording of oral communication tasks.
- A number of co-curricular activities support the development of English-related skills, knowledge, and attitudes, including a drama club, reading groups, debating, and in-school prizes for writing.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The overall quality of collaborative planning and preparation is very good, with some excellent practices established, particularly in the area of reflective engagement with changes needed to implement the new Junior Cycle English specification.
- It was reported that, traditionally, the department functioned as a very collegial environment, with formal meetings to discuss logistical arrangements and informal sharing of resources and methods among individual members. Changes required to fully implement the junior cycle specification have led to the agreement of collective classroom and departmental co-ordination practices in 2018 that are strengthening the formal and strategic aspects of the department's long-established collaborative culture.
- The teachers of English reported that their engagement in subject learning and review meetings (SLAR) last year was very productive, providing them with a model for formally discussing teaching methods leading to the emergence of particular examples of student work.
- Excellent leadership and vision are being provided by the subject co-ordinator. Very good practices were established at the start of this school year, in relation to the structuring of subject department meetings, with collective goals discussed and agreed in relation to particular aspects of teachers' practice.
- A key area for development is to explicitly timetable "show and tell" segments as part of departmental meetings, where colleagues would share expertise in different methodologies to support particular aspects of student learning.

- All class group plans should be uploaded to the school's shared platform over time, to support substitute teachers and also discussions of possible planning approaches. A well-developed departmental plan for the three years of junior cycle has been agreed. Over the coming years, a departmental plan needs to be agreed for senior cycle English, building on this precedent and drawing on the senior cycle plans of plans that have been developed and implemented by individual teachers, but are not available at departmental level.

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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management and Staff of St Caimin's Community School welcomes the positive nature of this report. The report recognises the professionalism and innovation of the school's English Department and highlights the collaboration and collegiality which underpins their practice. This report gives formal recognition to the work and effort invested in the implementation of the new specification at junior cycle and the reflective way the Department has embraced ongoing change in all areas. The Board welcomes the formal acknowledgement of the high participation rates at Junior and Leaving Certificate levels, with very good learner outcomes achieved in state examinations.

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The English Department has reviewed the Inspector's report and is currently working on the recommendations therein.

- Members of the English Department, individually and collectively, store their resources on the school's shared online platform. Links to relevant resources will be included in all plans moving forward.
- To enable all teachers to get optimal value from this shared resource area, ongoing CPD will be offered to teachers to upskill in this area. Following initial training, ongoing support will be available in-house to support teachers in this area.
- It is envisioned that access to this in-house CPD will lead to the uploading of all teachers' plans and the formal sharing of expertise via the shared online platform.
- A subcommittee has been established to collate the plans and schemes of work already in operation at senior level within the school and to formalise a detailed collective plan.

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;