

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection in English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St. Louis Community School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Chapel Street Kiltimagh County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	91494R

Date of Inspection: 15-01-2020



**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	14 & 15 January 2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with acting principal and key staff• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during six lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to acting principal and relevant staff

School context

St. Louis Community School is a co-educational post-primary school. At the time of the inspection, enrolment stood at 591 students. The school has a very broad curriculum and offers the Junior Cycle, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Applied, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate. Post-Leaving Certificate courses are also provided to the wider community. In the school, all lessons are one hour in duration.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was very good.
- There was evidence of insightful formative feedback on written work; strategies to support students' engagement with the feedback were not evident some instances.
- In many lessons, students demonstrated confidence and fluency in oral responses to questions and in classroom discussion.
- Overall, provision and whole-school support for the subject is good; some highly commendable aspects include provision of co-curricular modules in creative writing and public speaking.
- Subject planning and preparation are of a good standard; while subject plans have been well developed and the excellent practice of including reflective commentary has been incorporated into some schemes of work, some areas of practice need to be further developed.
- A comprehensive TY programme is offered to students; planning for continuity of learning throughout the year requires attention.

Recommendations

- Strategies to support all students to engage with feedback should be agreed at subject department level and implemented to support improvement and the ongoing development of skills.
- The department should move from paper-based systems to accessible electronic folders to store all shared documents, should plan for specific assessment modes and methodologies in relation to identified learning outcomes for units of learning, and should agree a collective approach to the management and development of students' collections of texts.
- The TY programme should support continuity of learning throughout the year and provide for a strategic approach to the assessment of TY English based on learning outcomes and skills development across all modules.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good in the lessons observed.
- Lessons were very well planned and the time was well used in the lessons observed. In many instances, there was evidence of students' incremental engagement with units of learning spanning a number of lessons. Teachers' purposeful use of differentiated activities, based on the intended learning from previous lessons, helped all students reconnect with the topic and provided teachers with a useful assessment of students' progress.
- Students' learning experiences were enhanced by careful selection of materials to support and engage learners and a range of active learning methodologies was observed. In the LCA lesson observed, students used digital resources purposefully to complete assigned tasks. In the most effective instances, there was a very good balance between teacher talk and student activity and students engaged well with the planned learning.
- In many lessons, students demonstrated confidence and fluency in oral responses to questions and in classroom discussion. In some lessons, students prepared points for discussion in pairs and groups before sharing with the whole class. This approach validated and provided a platform for students' opinions and enabled all students to share knowledge and to develop critical thinking skills.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons and was well integrated with the lesson content. Some very well-presented copybooks and written work were observed during the evaluation.
- In some instances, there was evidence of insightful formative feedback on written work and some students commented on its usefulness in helping them to improve through the process of drafting and re-drafting. However, students' engagement with the feedback was not evident in some instances. It is advised that strategies to support all students to engage with feedback should be implemented to support improvement and the ongoing development of skills.
- Some very good questioning techniques were observed where higher-order questions required students to revisit prior knowledge, make connections with the current learning intentions and expand their understanding. In some instances, lower-order questions predominated and insufficient wait time was afforded to students. Teachers should strive to ensure a balance is achieved and that purposeful questioning supports both learning and assessment.

2. SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall, subject provision and whole-school support for the subject are good; some highly commendable aspects include provision of modules in creative writing and public speaking that are timetabled in addition to English lessons.
- 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.
- 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. Other classrooms lacked these supports for high-quality learner experiences. It would be worthwhile ensuring that the learning environment promotes high-quality learning experiences for all students.

- The board of management and senior management team encourage and support all teachers to engage in continuing professional development. Teachers have engaged positively with further learning opportunities.
- The special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinators ensure that students' needs are made known to teachers at the beginning of the school year and provide guidance and assistance throughout the school year, with a particular focus on JCSP and students who are participating in Level 2 Learning Programmes. The SEN department uses a responsive and fluid approach that enables specific intense short-term interventions to be provided at the point of need. It is planned to move towards team teaching as a model for SEN support.
- In junior cycle, first-year class groups are mixed ability. From second 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 extending 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 extra-curricular activities that extend their experience of English including drama groups, creative writing competitions, theatre trips and reading for pleasure.

3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject planning and preparation are of good quality, including some excellent practices.
- Subject plans have been well developed and the excellent practice of including reflective commentary has been incorporated into some schemes of work. Subsequent iterations of schemes of work reflect the learning and experiences noted in teachers' contemporaneous reflections.
- Teachers have engaged positively with the subject learning and assessment review (SLAR) process and reports show that teachers have valued this opportunity for professional collaboration.
- In some instances, there was scope to include information and guidance to support the use of specific methodologies. In addition, specific assessment modes and tasks should be associated with learning outcomes. The management and development of student's collection of texts would also benefit from more specificity, in particular by identifying which units of learning should result in items for inclusion in the collection.
- To extend opportunities for collaborative planning, teachers should use accessible electronic folders to store all shared documents such as meeting minutes, SLAR reports, schemes of work and lesson plans.
- The TY English programme offers a range of learning experiences to students through a modular approach to teaching and assessment. There is scope to develop a strategic approach to the overall assessment of TY English based on learning outcomes and skills development, including a variety of genres and extended pieces of writing. This approach

should also take into account the impact of the various TY activities on continuity of learning.

- 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 how approaches to class group formation, teaching and learning, and assessment may affect student outcomes.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the acting 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;