

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of English
REPORT**

**St Paul's Christian Brothers School (CBS)
North Brunswick Street, Dublin 7
Roll number: 604300**

Date of inspection: 28 February 2014



**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

Dates of inspection	27, 28 February 2014
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the majority of lessons observed.
- A small number of lessons would have benefited from a more focused approach to the communication and assessment of learning outcomes.
- Very good practice was observed where students were encouraged to reflect on their own learning.
- Classroom atmosphere was universally positive and students were co-operative and participated well.
- Timetabling provision is very good.
- The English teachers are highly committed to the success and progress of their students.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The good practice of revisiting learning outcomes at the end of the lesson to assess student learning should be extended to all lessons.
 - The subject plan should be further developed to integrate the desired learning outcomes with relevant information about resources, methodologies, skills development and assessment.
 - Minutes and records of planning meetings should be maintained.
 - Teachers should formalise their practices around the sharing of resources.
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INTRODUCTION

St Paul's CBS is an all-boys secondary school with a current enrolment of 246 students. The school provides the Junior Certificate programme, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), Leaving Certificate programme, Leaving Certificate Applied Programme and an optional Transition Year programme. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good in the majority of lessons observed. A small number of lessons would have benefited from a more focused approach to the communication and assessment of learning outcomes.
- Teachers prepared well for lessons and communicated the lesson objective to students. Best practice was seen where teachers identified the planned learning outcomes in terms of what the students should have learnt during the lesson and then revisited the outcomes at the end of the lesson to assess attainment. This good practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Teachers had prepared resources for lessons with a clear focus on progressing learning. Very good practice was seen where teachers extended the range of resources used to include aural and visual inputs. For example, in one senior cycle lesson students were asked to listen to a song and critically analyse it using pre-taught criteria.
- In some lessons, very well organised pair work and group work were observed. Students were given clear instructions, time limits for the activity and well-defined success criteria. Teachers had high expectations of achievement and students worked well together.
- Differentiation was central to many of the lessons observed where the teacher supported individual students to work at a pace appropriate to their ability. It would be worthwhile sharing best practice in this area so that all teachers can benefit from each other's experience and techniques.
- In some lessons, students were encouraged to reflect on their own learning: they were asked to consider why they found a task difficult to complete and what skills were useful when attempting the task; they were also asked to reflect on their behaviour and attitudes. This very good practice is commended.
- Self and peer assessment was encouraged. A department-wide practice has been established whereby all teachers require students to read over their work before handing it in for teacher assessment. This very good practice could be supported by giving students clear criteria for reviewing their work and by requiring students to respond in a focused way to formative assessment feedback.
- Classroom atmosphere was universally affirming and students were co-operative and participated well. Interpersonal relationships supported a positive learning environment.
- The school has a strong emphasis on literacy development and encourages reading through timetabled library classes that are part of the English subject provision. The whole-school literacy strategy includes a number of practices that have been adopted by English teachers. It would be worthwhile reviewing their implementation and planning future development.

- All teachers emphasise the development of oral skills as part of teaching. Students are encouraged to read aloud in class both from their own work and from class texts. This is very good practice.
- The JCSP library provides a wide range of resources and facilitates students to access reading materials appropriate to their interest and ability. The JCSP librarian has also initiated a range of activities to enhance students' interest in reading and to expand their experience of the world of literature. This is highly commended.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling provision is very good with all class groups having five lessons per week, while the LCA class has six lessons.
- Access to higher-level English at both junior and senior cycle is supported through concurrent timetabling and higher-level uptake is actively encouraged. Commendably, attainment and uptake levels are increasing in line with DEIS planning and targets.
- Junior cycle classes are organised in mixed-ability groups with one smaller class group in each year providing for students who need additional support. The school makes every effort to meet students' needs by providing learning support in small groups or individually.
- At senior cycle, all students have access to higher level and are fully supported by teachers to achieve the best possible levels of attainment. Movement between levels is facilitated by concurrent timetabling and careful selection of texts.
- A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including JCSP library activities, debating and cinema and theatre visits, provides students with many opportunities to extend their learning.
- Student progress is reported to parents regularly. The student journal is in constant use to communicate between school and home. Exams for all years are held and reported on at Christmas and at the end of the summer term. Mock exams are also timetabled for third-year and sixth-year students. Parent-teacher meetings are held annually for each year group and twice each year for exam classes.
- The English teachers are highly committed to the success and progress of their students. Teachers have the opportunity to teach both higher-level and ordinary-level classes at junior and senior cycle. This good practice supports teachers' skills development and provides a platform for sharing practice and resources at all levels.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The subject department plan describes the content to be addressed for each year group. In some cases, a learning outcomes approach has been adopted. This good work should now be extended to link the desired learning outcomes with relevant information about resources, methodologies, skills development and assessment.
- The subject department plan contains information about a number of progressive actions and strategies for teaching and learning. For example, there is information about an agreed structure for paragraphing written answers. It would be worthwhile assessing the impact of these strategies on teaching and learning and reporting on the outcomes. The

continuing development of the subject should be reflected in minutes and records of planning meetings.

- A very good range of paper-based and electronic resources has been developed and acquired by teachers of English. These are shared on a collegial and informal basis. This approach should now be formalised.

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 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.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the recognition and endorsement of very good practice and the acknowledgement of a subject department “highly committed to the success and progress of their students” and the identification of the “universally positive” classroom atmosphere. The Board also welcomes the identification of the active encouragement provided to students to take the subject at higher level and that “attainment and uptake levels are increasing in line with DEIS planning and targets.” The Board also notes the identification of the importance of the JCSP library to the school and the range of activities carried out by the JCSP librarian in conjunction with the teaching staff “to enhance students’ interest in reading and to expand their experience of the world of literature.”

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

A plan has been put in place to formalise subject department meetings and to maintain the minutes and records of these. The Board will also explore how it can assist staff in the development of subject plans in line with the recommendation made by the inspector. The Board notes that the inspector identifies “the good practice of revisiting learning outcomes at the end of the lesson to assess student learning” taking place in the school. In line with her recommendation it will encourage the extension of this practice to all lessons. In the area of the sharing of resources among teachers in the subject department, the school has recently acquired high speed broadband and as a result is now introducing an online platform to assist teachers with resource sharing and also to assist them in sharing resources and setting assignments for students.