An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Coláiste Dhúlaigh Post Primary School
Coolock, Dublin 17
Roll number: 70330Q

Date of inspection: 14 March 2014
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>Dates of inspection</th>
<th>13, 14 March 2014</th>
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<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>• Observation of teaching and learning during eight class periods</strong></td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Examination of students’ work</td>
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<td>• Meeting with subject co-ordinator</td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
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MAIN FINDINGS

• Teaching and learning observed was good or very good in most lessons, but there was scope for development in some lessons.

• Excellent resources were deployed in many lessons.

• Classroom management was generally very good and a mutually respectful atmosphere was evident.

• There is a well-stocked and welcoming Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) library.

• Curricular provision for English is very good.

• The English department comprises a committed and hardworking team of teachers.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

• The practice of sharing learning outcomes at the start of the lesson and revisiting them to assess student learning should be extended to all lessons.

• Lessons should be planned to ensure that all students are purposefully engaged and challenged.

• A homework policy should be agreed and implemented with the intention of raising expectations and attainment levels for all students.

• An overarching Transition Year (TY) plan which sets out the rationale for the programme, identifies the skills that students will develop and defines assessment strategies should be developed.
INTRODUCTION
Coláiste Dhúlaigh operates under the City of Dublin Education and Training Board. It is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 122 girls and 206 boys. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) initiative and provides the Junior Certificate, the JCSP, a compulsory TY programme, the Leaving Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING
- Teaching and learning observed was good or very good in most lessons but there was scope for development in some lessons.
- Lesson objectives were shared with students in all lessons. Very good practice was seen where the lesson was structured around planned learning outcomes which were shared with students and revisited at the end of the lesson to assess student learning. This practice should be extended to all lessons.
- Teachers used a good range of methodologies. Best practice was seen where clear learning outcomes had been defined and students worked either individually or in groups to complete tasks while the teacher facilitated learning. In other lessons, there was less student engagement. Lessons should be planned to enable students to take responsibility for their own learning and to ensure that all students are busy and engaged purposefully with the learning process.
- As part of the whole-school literacy strategy, students’ oral skills are being developed. Teachers should encourage students to extend their vocabulary and range of expression.
- Excellent resources were deployed in many lessons. In one lesson, the teacher used vintage TV advertisements to help LCA students to understand how advertising has developed. In another lesson, the teacher had prepared differentiated tasks based on colour-coded levels of challenge for students.
- Many classrooms have very good displays of students’ work and subject-specific material.
- Classroom management was generally very good. In most lessons, teachers interacted calmly and efficiently with students. A mutually respectful atmosphere was evident and there were good relationships between students and teachers.
- Questioning was the main method of in-class assessment. A range of lower-order and higher-order questions was used to assess understanding and encourage student participation. Students contributed well to classroom discussions and showed good knowledge of the topic and texts in many instances. Very good practice was seen where students were challenged to think about their responses and underlying attitudes. Teachers are encouraged to extend opportunities for student reflection and to ensure that all students across the full ability range are challenged.
- Whole-school and English department homework policies have been developed. However, homework journals and copybooks examined during the inspection do not reflect a consistent approach to the assignment and monitoring of homework. It is
recommended that a homework policy is agreed and implemented with the intention of raising expectations and attainment levels for all students.

- The well-stocked and welcoming JCSP library provides an extensive range of supports to encourage reading and literacy development. The librarian is a member of the school literacy development team and promotes awareness of literacy targets amongst staff.

**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- Curricular provision for English is very good. Timetabled library classes for all students and TY drama modules are also provided.

- Learning support is provided through withdrawal from Irish for those students who have exemptions, and through withdrawal from non-core subjects for other students.

- Concurrent timetabling has been achieved for almost all years and there are some instances of co-timetabling of English teachers. Teachers could use these very good timetabling arrangements to facilitate collaborative practice and team-teaching.

- All students are encouraged to take the subject at the highest appropriate level. Mixed-ability classes at junior cycle have been introduced with the objective of improving attainment. Teachers should now assess the impact of this strategy.

- At senior cycle, students choose to follow the higher-level or ordinary-level course based on their Junior Certificate results and the professional opinion of their teachers. Concurrency, work planning and careful selection of texts facilitate movement and flexibility.

- A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities, including workshops and cinema and theatre visits, enhance the learning experience for students.

- Teachers of English have developed an excellent range of resources. A planned and structured approach for sharing resources should be developed.

- Summative assessments are carried out twice each year for all class groups while exam classes sit mock exams in spring. Reports are sent home twice each year and annual parent-teacher meetings are held for each class group.

- Assessment for learning strategies are being introduced. Good examples of formative feedback and individual planning based on “mock” examination outcomes and class test results were seen. These practices should become the norm for all teachers.

- The English department comprises a committed and hardworking team of teachers, most of whom have subject-specific qualifications. Best practice related to subject-specific skills, techniques and approaches to record keeping and assessment should be shared among all teachers of English.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The subject plan reflects a well-established department. Schemes of work for all years and most class groups are included. Some of these include reference to methodologies, learning outcomes and resources. To extend this good practice, all schemes of work should have a skills development focus and link assessment methods with learning outcomes.
• Analyses of state examination results were seen in the subject folder. These analyses along with other student assessment data will support future English department target setting and progress monitoring.

• The TY plan describes the main aspects of the programme. The centrality of TY to students’ learning in Coláiste Dhúlaigh should be reflected in an overarching TY plan which sets out the rationale for the programme, identifies the skills that students will develop and defines assessment strategies.

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; a response was not received from the board.

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