

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of English  
REPORT**

**Coláiste Éamann Rís  
Callan, County Kilkenny  
Roll number: 61510R**

**Date of inspection: 8 April 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	8 April 2014
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during four class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching observed was very good.
- Appropriate lesson content and a range of skills were taught in all lessons.
- The teachers observed were excellent role models for their students in their modelling of language use, their enthusiasm for their subject, their setting of high standards for their students and their communication skills.
- High expectations and standards of students' work were in evidence in most lessons inspected, although the quality of students' written work in one lesson was unsatisfactory.
- Very good student participation was evident in all lessons.
- There was evidence of very good progress in implementation of recommendations made in the last English inspection report (2010).

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Students in the ordinary-level junior cycle classes should receive regular written work in a range of genres and this work should be formatively corrected.
  - Students should be encouraged to engage in the process of writing and in peer assessment.
  - The current junior cycle programme should be expanded in order to give students a broader experience of English literature in junior cycle.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Éamann Rís is an all-boys secondary school with an enrolment of 221 students, under the patronage of the Edmund Rice Schools' Trust (ERST). The school offers the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP).

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Three teachers were visited during the evaluation. One of these was substituting for a teacher who was not present on the day of the evaluation. The quality of teaching observed was very good.
- The three teachers were excellent role models for their students in their modelling of language use, their enthusiasm for their subject, their setting of high standards for their students and their communication skills.
- The introduction to all lessons provided a clear roadmap for the lesson. Links were made with previous learning and teachers' explanations were very clear. Teachers ensured individual students' understanding and enabled them to learn from their mistakes. Not only was lesson content made accessible, but key skills were also taught.
- Teachers used a range of effective methodologies including prediction and cooperative learning. To further the use of cooperative learning, it is recommended that the layout of the classrooms be rearranged. Information and communication technology (ICT) was well used.
- The quality of teacher questioning was very good. A range of questions, both lower and higher order, were asked. It was evident that the teachers have worked to implement the recommendation made in the last inspection report in relation to questioning skills.
- Teachers have their own base classrooms and two of these three classrooms were print-rich learning environments. A very good focus on developing students' literacy skills, including spelling and comprehension skills, was evident.
- In all lessons, students engaged very well with learning. Teacher-student relations were warm and students' behaviour was exemplary.
- In almost all classes inspected, the quality of students' learning was very good. Students displayed very good knowledge of their texts. There was evidence of frequent written work being assigned in a range of genres. The integration of language and literature is commended and there was a high standard of written work and maintenance of students' folders and copies.
- In almost all classes, students' work was extremely well corrected and they received very good feedback on their work and progress. An assessment for learning approach was observed in these lessons. It is recommended that teachers encourage students to engage in peer assessment from time to time. This would be effective in ensuring that students learn from each other's mistakes. It is also recommended that students be encouraged to engage in writing as a process by drafting and re-drafting their work.
- In one lesson, there was little evidence from students' homework journals of homework being assigned frequently. Students should receive regular written work in a range of genres and this work should be formatively corrected on a regular basis.

- Some of the English teachers engage in very good analysis of examination results and adopt a school self-evaluation approach to identifying their strengths and areas for improvement. Teachers should also consider engaging in peer observation as a means of further developing their considerable skill set.

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

- The timetabling arrangements for English are satisfactory and there are plans to introduce an additional period on the timetable in third year. Management is urged to continue to explore means of introducing five English periods for all first-year students as was recommended in the last English inspection report. English periods are evenly distributed across the week in keeping with good practice.
- One of the first-year English periods is given over to a weekly silent reading class which, while a laudable practice in its own right, results in just three classes being available for other English activities. One first-year group formally studies a novel and during this time, silent reading is suspended. This good practice should be adopted across first year.
- The practice continues of students being placed in mixed-ability classes for the first term and then being set into higher and ordinary-level class groups. In line with the recommendation made in the last report, teachers review this practice on an annual basis. Concurrent timetabling facilitates movement of students.
- Assessment practices are good. Common assessment helps to determine students' most appropriate level at key transition points in first and fifth year. Students sit formal tests three times each year.
- There is good support for English and good provision of resources. One classroom serves as a library. There are good ICT resources in place.
- Most teachers have engaged well with continuing professional development and have participated in a range of relevant courses. These teachers also organise a range of co-curricular activities for their students.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Following the previous English inspection report, the English subject plan is now written in terms of learning outcomes, and has been well developed. Collaboration and sharing of resources is reported to be very good between two of the three teachers of English. These teachers meet informally on a regular basis to discuss issues pertaining to English. All teachers of English should involve themselves in such discussions.
- The planned programme for English is appropriate overall but some class groups currently only study one formal novel over the course of the three-year junior cycle. Third year is mainly focused on revision. It is recommended that teachers strive to give students a broader experience of English literature in junior cycle and formally teach a novel in first year and introduce more new material, such as short stories, in third year.
- The TY programme, as outlined in the subject plan, is commended for its breadth and the opportunities it provides for students to develop their presentation skills.
- The English lessons observed were very well planned. Teachers keep very good records of their work and students' progress.

- Most English teachers participate on the literacy team. The literacy plan is commended for its manageable targets and strategies to achieve these targets.
- It was evident that the teachers and school management have given thoughtful consideration to the recommendations made in the previous English inspection report.

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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.