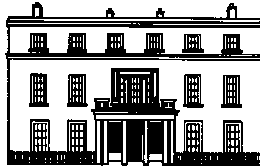


An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Pobalscoil na Trionóide
Youghal, County Cork
Roll number: 91513S

Date of inspection: 26 November 2014



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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| Dates of inspection | 24 & 26 November 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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers |

MAIN FINDINGS

- Overall, the standard of teaching and learning was very good.
- There is a strong sense of collaboration and enthusiasm within the English department.
- An integrated approach to the teaching of English was a very strong feature of the department's practice.
- The adoption of a writing process approach in a number of classes was very worthwhile.
- Very good learning environments have been developed in English rooms.
- There is very good provision for English on the school timetable.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the department utilise its considerable expertise to support the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies in first year and in junior cycle.
 - The use of student writing collections as an assessment tool to support the writing process should be implemented.
 - The department should link senior cycle schemes of work more closely to particular periods in the year, moving from yearly to monthly or termly plans.
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INTRODUCTION

Pobalscoil na Tríonóide is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 868 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate (Established) programme, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). In addition, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme is offered to students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Overall, the standard of teaching and learning was very good. This incorporated examples of good, very good and excellent practice. There is a strong sense of collaboration and enthusiasm within the English department. All lessons were well-prepared and presented with a clear structure. Learning intentions were clear.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used appropriately during lessons. Members of the department have begun to utilise an online learning platform to support learning in English. In addition, a comprehensive shared folder has been developed. The provision of a visualiser for the English department would be worthwhile and it is positive to note that the school has begun to advance this.
- A variety of approaches to support students' reading and writing skills were observed. A particular feature of the very good practice present in the department is the integrated approach adopted to the teaching of language and literature, along with speaking, listening, reading and writing. In addition, many English rooms incorporate displays of writing wheels and of different comprehension strategies. The use of comprehension strategies, such as guided reading, was observed during the evaluation. It is recommended that the department utilise its considerable expertise to support the continued development of comprehension strategies in first year and in junior cycle. In this context, linking to local primary schools where there are relevant programmes on this area would be very worthwhile. The direct teaching of these strategies for independent use by students should also be advanced. Beyond this, there is a clear awareness within the department of the need to expand students' vocabulary and enhance their word-consciousness. This is positive.
- The adoption of a writing process approach in a number of different class groups was also worthwhile. In planning this approach, the creation of a writing collection is recommended, to be used as an assessment tool with a number of different genres to be explored over the course of a year. This should be utilised in first year with a set pattern to ensure feedback leads to action and then to grading of assignments where appropriate. Particularly good practice in supporting student writing was observed where success criteria were utilised effectively, having been identified by students on the basis of a writing model.
- Group and pair activities, along with listening and speaking tasks were a regular element in teachers' practice. These worked well. As a further extension of good practice in this area the English department should consider how groupwork, pair work, active listening and speaking are explicitly taught. In some instances, further consideration might be given to matching group activities to the particular task assigned, particularly in order to facilitate 'wait time' for thinking, but also to adopt a structure which ensures accountability within groups.
- Very good learning environments were developed in English rooms. The continued development of English rooms incorporating a particular focus on the development of word consciousness would act as an extension of this very good practice. The display of students' written work was a very good feature of practice in the English department.

- Common assessments are organised in English. Homework was regularly assigned, monitored and feedback was provided. Feedback in senior cycle provided strong support for students' engagement with the certificate examination. As an extension of this very good practice, teachers are encouraged to consider student action as a result of feedback in examining approaches to assessment.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good provision for English on the school timetable. In particular, the recent move to increase provision for English to five lessons per week in first year is very worthwhile. The link made to students' previous learning through the provision of a reading lesson in first year is positive and the good practice observed of maintaining a brief hardcopy notebook as a reading journal should be maintained across the English department.
- Class groups in junior cycle and in TY are organised on a mixed-ability basis. In senior cycle groups are organised on a mixed-ability basis within levels. This is very good practice, ensuring the maintenance of high expectations with regard to student uptake in English.
- English teachers maintain a mobile library from which first-year students can select books. These libraries are supported by senior management. A further part of discussions by the literacy committee is the potential for the school library to be used solely as a library facility. Within the constraints of physical resources, such a proposal has considerable merit and the school anticipates this will come to fruition in the current school year.
- Sessions involving both internal and external CPD providers have been accessed and organised by the English department. As well as subject-specific in-service training, and membership of the relevant subject association, training in disciplinary and generic literacy strategies has been undertaken and is informing and being incorporated into departmental practice.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is a well-developed English subject plan. There are regular formal and informal meetings and minutes of these meetings are maintained diligently. There is a clear sense through the topics discussed in meetings of the enthusiasm of teachers for their subject and their eagerness to afford opportunities to expand students' experiences of language and literature.
- Very good work has been undertaken in developing the subject plan to support learning in junior cycle. This work should continue in the context of ongoing curricular reform. Schemes of work for senior cycle are also in place. It is recommended that the department should link senior cycle schemes of work more closely to particular periods in the year, moving from yearly to monthly or termly plans.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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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