

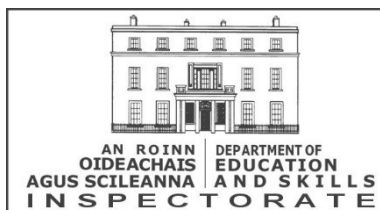
**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of ENGLISH  
REPORT**

**Coláiste Mhuirlinne  
Doughiska Road, Galway  
Roll number: 76096S**

**Date of inspection: 26 January 2016**



# REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH

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## INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	25 and 26 January 2016
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal, deputy principal, and teachers</li><li>• Discussion with the special educational needs co-ordinator</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during six class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal, and teachers</li></ul>

## MAIN FINDINGS

- The teachers of English are a reflective group, committed to continuous improvement.
- Very good, affirming rapport was evident between teachers and students.
- Teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons evaluated.
- An excellent integration of active learning strategies was noted in all classes observed.
- Good quality, detailed schemes of work and a very thoughtful description of subject department practices had been compiled by the time of the evaluation.
- Current junior cycle timetable provision for English needs to be improved.

## MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- A minimum of a single period of English on four days of the week should be provided to all junior cycle groups. In the medium term, the flexibility provided in the *Framework for Junior Cycle 2015* for the provision of additional classes of English should be reviewed by senior management.
- To further develop the schemes of work for junior cycle English, planning for assessment should be engaged in while designing units of work.
- A more formal sharing of methodologies should be incorporated into the subject department meeting format.
- Aspects of the teaching of writing should be further developed by teachers explicitly modelling the draft/redraft writing process and also guiding students to engage in peer and self-assessment of writing samples using success criteria.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Mhuirlinne operates under the patronage of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb) and is situated to the east of Galway City. Established in 2013, it is a co-educational school with an enrolment of 273 students in 2015/16. The student population spans a range of social, cultural, national, and economic backgrounds. While the school only provides the Junior Certificate programme at present, it is planning for the introduction of Transition Year (TY) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme in 2016/17.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The teachers of English are a hard-working and dedicated group who had all engaged in detailed planning for the lessons evaluated.
- Students were affirmed and encouraged for their contributions in every class.
- Teaching ranged from good to very good in the lessons evaluated.
- Very good uses of pair work and of the distribution of questions across class groups were noted in all classes. Other commendable strategies observed in some classrooms included the use of digital clips to support students' comprehension of texts or engagement with written tasks.
- From the sample of copies evaluated during the inspection, it was clear that all teachers were monitoring student work and that written formative feedback was being provided to advise students on how to improve their work.
- To support even higher achievement in students' writing, a more consistent promotion of a draft/redraft process approach needs to be explicitly modelled by teachers and required in substantial assignments.
- Learning achieved in the English lessons observed was supported by commendable cross-departmental implementation of assessment for learning (AfL) practices. Those practices included explicitly sharing learning intentions with students, recapping on them and seeking students' feedback on their level of understanding toward the end of classes. This evidence testifies to the success that has been achieved by the school's self-evaluation (SSE) team in promoting an AfL approach in classrooms.
- Building on these foundations, it is recommended that students' peer and self-assessment skills be further strengthened in two ways. With regard to oral work, the promotion of spontaneous debate from time to time when responding to student feedback is advised. Also, teaching students to use success criteria when evaluating peer-generated exemplars of standard is recommended.
- Students' "learning to learn" skills were supported by teachers' demonstrations of how to assemble ideas for writing tasks using graphic organisers. Additional supports recommended include a key assignment approach to setting substantial tasks for students, encouraging students to view recommended websites relevant to specific topics, and the allocation of a percentage toward in-house examination results for particular tasks such as producing personal responses based on books read privately.

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

- Good quality subject provision was evident during the evaluation.
- School management supports the delivery of English through the allocation of teacher-based rooms, through its action planning for literacy week and for the future stocking of the school library, and by its flexible deployment of team teaching for particular class groups.
- Four periods are provided for English in first, second, and third year. In the short term, the timetabling of the subject needs to be improved by providing a single period for the subject on four days to all class groups, rather than the current situation where some first and second year groups have a double and two single periods for English.
- In the medium term, it is advised that the school's allocation for JC English be reviewed in the light of the flexibility provided in *Framework for Junior Cycle (2015)* for the timetabling of additional classes for English if the school feels that it is in the best interests of its students and school context.
- All classrooms were vibrant learning environments, incorporating displays of subject-specific materials and of students' work.
- A range of co-curricular and extra-curricular activities is organised through teacher volunteerism, such as the school drama and glee club, to support the learning of English. It was reported that a number of students have expressed an interest in helping to organise future activities of this type. Harnessing that student energy would be an excellent support to the learning of all.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Good quality, detailed plans for the coverage of prescribed texts were presented for all three years, encompassing methodologies, literacy and numeracy supports, and a comprehensive description of the subject department's practices. The department is also steadily building up a pool of electronic teaching resources on its shared drive. The teachers of English are commended for this collaborative work.
- To support ongoing junior cycle scheme development, planning for assessment tasks needs to be integrated into all schemes, to support the development of students' skills, and particularly of their collections of texts. There was evidence of this happening in some of the individual classes observed. It now needs to be translated into scheme development.
- It was reported that a good deal of sharing of methodologies takes place at the school's SSE team meetings, involving some of the teachers of English. Building on this precedent, it is recommended that a formal "show and tell" slot be incorporated at the beginning of each English subject department meeting, where colleagues would share methodologies that they have found work well for teaching particular aspects of oral, reading or writing skills.

The board of management of the school 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**

## **Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report**

### **Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.**

- Teachers have further developed the draft/redraft writing process by using the whole school initiative *common approach to marking* template designed by members of the English department and the literacy committee. A success criteria template for writing is in the process of being developed and writing samples have been added to the current collection of writing samples for peer and self-assessment.
- The English department have integrated assessment tasks into the schemes to support ongoing Junior Cycle scheme development.
- At the beginning of every English department meeting, teachers engage in a formal “show and tell” to share methodologies that work well in class.
- There is no longer double periods of English. Unfortunately, this happened due to timetabling constraints.