

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of English  
REPORT**

**Newport College  
Newport, County Tipperary  
Roll number: 72450N**

**Date of inspection: 4 May 2011**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	3 and 4 May 2011
<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**

- In the lessons observed, teaching was adequate in some areas, with scope for development in others. Learning was fair, with room for improvement. While some factors outside the control of the school are impacting on students' learning, some teaching practices also need to be reviewed.
- In general, good interpersonal relations existed between teachers and students.
- There is good whole-school support for the subject.
- The only teacher with a specialist qualification in special educational needs support is mostly timetabled for mainstream classes, while resource hours are mostly delegated to part-time teachers with no specialist qualifications in the area.
- While progress has been made in subject department planning, this is an area where there is still scope for development.
- Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) planning for literacy development across the curriculum is at an early stage

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- In order to enhance learning and achievement it is recommended that more varied active learning opportunities be created for students, that more varied learning resources be utilised, and that the subject department plan and implement a consistent programme to incrementally develop the components of students' reading and writing skills.
- The current model of special educational needs support in the school should be reviewed. More teachers on staff should be encouraged to undertake special educational needs professional learning, and team-teaching arrangements should be put in place to support the learning of particular cohorts.
- Subject department planning for English needs to be developed further by greater systematic teacher sharing of effective practices, by the revision of existing schemes of work, and by the development of departmental assessment for learning (AfL) practices.
- Senior management should request the school's DEIS planning committee to lead the drafting and implementation of a whole-school literacy action plan.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Newport College is a co-educational vocational school serving a rural community. Current enrolment is 173. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion. It offers the following programmes: the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses,

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- In the lessons observed, teaching was adequate in some areas, with scope for development in others. Good teaching practices included good oral language modelling by teachers, some pre-teaching of keywords, some active student learning activities, and the development of print-rich environments. Areas for development included advance planning of achievable learning outcomes for the time available, the creation of a better balance between teacher and student activity in some cases, and greater integration of language tasks within the teaching of literary texts.
- Learning was fair, with room for improvement. It is acknowledged that the literacy scores of some students on entry and the chronic absenteeism of a number of students are factors that impact on students' learning. However, in-class weaknesses also need to be addressed. The department should review its text choices, acquire differentiated resources to supplement studied texts, compile booklets to support students' study of lengthy texts, and make greater use of information and communication technology (ICT). In addition, there needs to be greater in-class differentiation. In this regard, team teaching should be considered as a possible support for some class groups.
- In general, good interpersonal relations existed between teachers and students. While discipline was maintained in all lessons, some passive and disengaged students were observed in lessons where teacher-talk predominated.
- Students' writing skills would be enhanced by more systematic use of the whiteboard to record keywords for pre-teaching and to model the questioning and decision-making processes needed to construct substantial answers. Also the subject department needs to plan and implement a consistent programme to incrementally develop students' vocabulary banks, spelling strategies, and their process approach to writing.
- Students' reading skills should be further developed by the department planning and implementing a consistent programme to teach effective dictionary use and explicit comprehension strategies, and to involve all junior cycle students in reading challenges.
- Homework was being set and monitored. However, the department needs to discuss and develop its practices in relation to the provision of formative feedback, to the sharing of criteria for assessment, and to their subsequent use in marking substantial pieces of students' work. Also, teachers should engage in ongoing diagnostic assessments of students' learning. Analysing and recording the recurring errors in students' work would guide teachers in planning lessons to remediate students' most common language errors.

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

- Whole-school supports for English include good timetable provision, teacher-based classrooms, reading and homework clubs, and a newly established library stocked with titles selected by students.
- The current model of special educational needs support in the school should be reviewed, given that the only teacher with a specialist qualification in the area is mostly timetabled for mainstream classes, while resource hours are mostly delegated to part-time teachers with no specialist qualifications in the area. Also, more teachers should be encouraged to undertake special educational needs professional learning, given the needs of the student body.
- School management is commended for keeping the LCA programme running, despite low uptake this year. The combined year one and two cohorts should be progressing, in a specific order, through different modules of work and key assignments. If an extra period could be provided for English and Communications in 2011/12, then that would provide better scope for covering the required work.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- While progress has been made in subject department planning, this is an area where there is still scope for development. For example, collaborative planning for class groups due to be taught by two teachers at different times during the week should be improved.
  - At the beginning of each subject department meeting, time should be specifically allocated for a “show and tell” input, where individuals would be asked to present a resource or strategy they use in their practice or have gained from CPD.
  - Existing termly schemes of work should be reshaped after discussions are held on the key learning outcomes and skills to be developed in each year of study and on how effective the texts selected for study are in meeting the interests and needs of students. JCSP targets and initiatives should be integrated into junior cycle schemes of work, and the LCA scheme should set out course coverage for combined year one and two cohorts, if that arrangement needs to continue.
  - The department should award some marks towards end-of-term results for tasks linked to the agreed learning outcomes for different year groups. Tasks could include a cumulative average for composition work, folder-maintenance, quotation tests, oral presentations, and project-work. A comparison of students’ certificate examination results in English with national norms for the uptake of levels and for the spread of grades should also be discussed at subject department meetings, as an aid to collective self-evaluation.
  - The school’s DEIS planning committee has been active and creative in improving students’ attendance. It now needs to lead the drafting and implementation of a whole-school literacy action plan.
  - Teachers had engaged in planning for all the lessons visited.
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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 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.

*Published October 2011*

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

## **Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board wishes to thank the inspectorate for the courteous and professional manner in which the inspection was carried out.

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

The timing of the inspection meant that the focus of teaching and learning in the classroom observed was on the State, practical and in-House exams. This constrained the delivery of the lessons.

Team Teaching has become a more widespread feature of classes. Team Teaching is favoured in the school whenever resources are available. The use of resource teaching hours has always been given careful consideration, and these resource hours are delegated where practical to qualified subject teachers.

Newport College operates a very successful book loan scheme. In order to keep costs down for students and parents the school has to find the balance between maintaining this attractive feature and purchasing new class sets and textbooks. However, a set of English dictionaries has been purchased for all senior cycle students. A variety of differentiated resources are being utilised at senior level.

An upgraded network now means greater access to the use of ICT for both students and staff.

The school is actively engaging with the drafting and implementation of a whole school literacy plan. The school is increasing its use of JCSP initiatives such as statements, keywords and reading initiatives like DEAR. The school has also seen an increase in the number of students participating in the JCSP. The English Department believes literacy is of paramount importance and will review the subject plan and aims to address this area.