

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Magh Éne College
Bundoran, Co Donegal
Roll number: 76083J

Date of inspection: 1 March 2013



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**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	1 March 2013
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 one double and three single class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers• Meeting with subject co-ordinator

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed.
- Student-centred approaches informed teaching practice and assessment was good.
- Uptake of higher-level English is good overall and very good in the junior cycle.
- Attainment is good on the whole with some areas for development.
- Timetabling commitment is very good in the Leaving Certificate programme and in year one of the junior cycle.
- Good work has been done in the area of planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Timetabling commitment should ensure daily contact with English for all students in the junior cycle.
 - To build on good work in the area of planning, the team should action plan to improve outcomes across the ability spectrum and the junior cycle English plan should be reviewed.
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INTRODUCTION

Magh Éne College, Bundoran is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 334 students. It provides English in the Junior Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the optional Transition Year (TY) programme. The school also offers Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good in the lessons observed.
- The learning intention was clearly communicated in most lessons. To build on this, learning should be reviewed at the end of the lesson to assess if planned outcomes have been achieved by all students.
- Student-centred approaches and a good variety of resources engaged students in learning.
- Classroom management was very good. Teachers moved around the classroom to monitor and encourage student learning and there was a very good rapport between students and teachers.
- Strategies to develop vocabulary were noted in some lessons. In one very good example, keywords were written on a slide for emphasis. To build on this, and to develop receptivity to language, all students should be explicitly facilitated to express a personal response to language both orally and in writing.
- Good assessment practice was observed. Discrete assessment criteria were used to evaluate the written work of the sixth-year group thus familiarising students with the examinations process. Peer assessment was also facilitated. It is very commendable that information gleaned from assessment practice was used in lessons to correct common errors. It is positive that teachers wrote encouraging comments on copybooks. To build on this, clear teacher directional feedback should be used to inform learning.
- Questioning strategy was good on the whole and in the best lessons, the development of higher-order thinking skills was a focus. This is very good practice. In some instances, a balance between targeted and open questioning should be maintained to ensure that all students are fully engaged and to avoid very confident students becoming over-dominant during interactions.
- Independent learning was encouraged through research tasks. Students were also facilitated to work collaboratively and through the process, to develop critical, self-evaluative and analytical skills. In this context, it is commendable that students were encouraged to cite evidence from the text to support their views.
- A good range of language skills was taught with some areas for development. In the senior cycle, students developed speaking and listening skills through project work and this is commended.
- There is however, a need to develop a far greater range of writing skills in the junior cycle. There should be adequate focus on writing in a variety of genres to foster an understanding of genre. It is very commendable that one junior cycle group learned about the process of writing. This good practice should be common to all classes. It is suggested that students maintain a developmental portfolio of their work in various stages, and that a variety of genres, including poetry, be creatively explored by all students.

- In a small minority of lessons, there was too much emphasis on repetitive note-taking with a narrow focus. Students should learn how to be note makers as this process is more likely to develop good critical and analytical skills and to develop life-long learning skills.
- Attainment is good on the whole with some areas for development. There is scope to use differentiated teaching and assessment methods to cater for the diverse needs of learners and to ensure that students of all ability are achieving, especially those in the upper range.
- Student engagement in learning was good or very good in lessons observed.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The quality of whole-school support for English is good on the whole.
- Timetabling commitment to English is very good in the senior cycle and especially in the Leaving Certificate programme, with six periods allocated in each of years five and six. Five periods are also provided in first year. However, there is scope to increase provision in the other years of the junior cycle.
- The department is well resourced.
- Classes are organised in mixed-ability groups in the junior cycle. Uptake of higher-level English is good overall and very good in the junior cycle.
- Three committed teachers are deployed across all programmes and there is very good engagement with continuing professional development.
- The school library actively supports the literacy strategy and an additional reading lesson is provided in second year to develop reading skills.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Good work has been done on the subject plan. There is a common template for the junior cycle with some variation according to year group. Commendably, the third-year section references listening comprehension under class work and this should be developed further and in all year groups in line with the syllabus.
- The content section of the junior cycle plan owes more to the examination than to the syllabus. The plan should be reviewed. There is an over-emphasis on cultural literacy to the detriment of social and personal literacy and the range of skills being developed is potentially narrow. It is also necessary to review texts being studied in the junior cycle to ensure that there is a sufficient range and variety to deliver syllabus aims and objectives. There is a need to develop planning for all syllabus skills.
- The content section of the TY plan is rich and varied, and supports the development of all language skills. Text choices are stimulating. It is commendable that there is reference to use of a response journal and this should be followed up in all programmes.
- It is positive that links to the learning-support department are documented and there is a good homework policy.
- Commendably, documentation includes a template inviting subject departments to reflect constructively on certificate examination results analysis and inviting suggestions of action to be taken. In this context, it is recommended that action planning now focus on

improving outcomes across the ability spectrum and especially in the upper range. A strong focus on differentiated practice in teaching and assessment should be a key strategy. Use could also be made of the chief examiner's English reports to help identify areas for improvement.

- Lessons were well planned and the quality of preparation in general was very good.
- Record keeping was good.

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.