

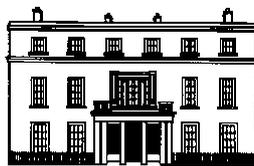
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of English
REPORT**

**Mountrath Community School
Dysartbeigh, Mountrath, Co. Laois
Roll number: 91550B**

Date of inspection: 19 October 2011



**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	18 and 19 October 2011
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 9 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teachers of English were observed to be hard-working and dedicated.
- The quality of teaching and learning was, overall, very good.
- Teachers have individual teaching strengths which should be shared among the English department.
- There was a focus on high standards; written work was frequently assigned.
- Students were very focused and well managed; a respectful, secure environment and good teacher-student relationships were in evidence.
- There is very good whole school support and provision for English.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Students should be given more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning.
 - Students should be given more opportunity for peer work and collaboration.
 - The English course should be expanded by teachers at junior cycle to provide more opportunities for reading, and three comparative texts should be taught in ordinary-level Leaving Certificate classes.
 - Teacher collaboration should be developed through sharing of teaching methods and resources.
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INTRODUCTION

Mountrath Community School has an enrolment of 694 students. It is the result of an amalgamation of three schools in 2009 and, therefore, teachers in the school have come from three separate traditions and contexts. The school serves the community of Mountrath and its environs. The school offers an optional Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) as well as the established Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was very good overall. Members of the English department were observed to be hard working and committed to their students.
- Lesson structure was good. This was particularly the case when the purpose of the lesson was outlined at the start. Explanations were generally clear.
- Teachers had prepared a range of good resources, including handouts, and many used information and communication technology (ICT) effectively. At times, there was an over-dependence on notes as aids for students and a tendency to inform students as opposed to asking their opinions, which led to a lack of independent learning in some lessons. It is recommended that teachers give students more opportunities to take responsibility for their own learning. Where this did happen and students were assigned work individually or together, there was active class participation and teachers were able to give individual attention as necessary.
- Questioning of students occurred in all lessons. The questioning was best and most inclusive when teachers asked open-ended questions of named students as well as general questions of the whole class to ensure that all students understood the topic.
- There was integration of language and literature in all lessons. This is commended as it puts learning in context. There were also good examples of the integration of the teaching of new vocabulary into the lesson and of developing effective writing skills, which clearly developed literacy.
- Some teachers used brainstorming and mind mapping to elicit students' responses. In some lessons, collaborative student work was encouraged through pair work or by students critiquing each other's work. In addition, the Toastmasters module in TY was a fine example of students' learning in a collaborative and active way. In some lessons students were more passive. It is recommended that more opportunities for collaborative learning be planned for in lessons to give students a greater voice, to facilitate more active learning and as an aid to differentiation.
- Students were extremely well behaved, focused and well managed, and very good teacher-student and student-student relationships were in evidence. Teachers were very affirming.
- Almost all teachers have their own base classrooms and these classrooms were all stimulating learning environments.
- There was evidence that homework is frequently assigned and is very well corrected, often in detail. Students should be encouraged to engage in self or peer assessment of shorter pieces of work to give them more responsibility for their own learning.
- Students' folders and copies were very well maintained. The focus observed in some lessons on students being asked to redraft their work is commended.

- It was evident that effective learning was taking place in English lessons.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- There is very good provision for English and good timetabling of the subject. Concurrence facilitates correct placement of students and is used for sharing of class groups in some cases. This is good practice.
- The nine teachers of English are all qualified to teach English to the highest level and the good practice of rotating the teaching of higher and ordinary-level class groups means that all teachers have equal opportunities to teach very good or less able class groups.
- Teachers have good access to a range of resources for English and a school library is under development. Teachers are members of the organisation for teachers of English and some are involved in providing in-service for teachers of English.
- There are draft homework and assessment policies and very good assessment practices. Monthly tests and end of term tests are given to students.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The teachers of English have made a very good start in terms of subject planning. Collaborative plans have been developed for each year group and it was evident that teachers are following these plans. Good practices such as common assessments, rotation of the role of coordinator of English and writing assigned homework on the board are in place and there is agreement on texts in senior cycle to facilitate movement of students.
- First years study one novel as well as a range of other genres. Another novel and a drama are taught in second and third year. It is recommended that the junior cycle programme be expanded and that more opportunities for developing students' literacy skills be developed. All Leaving Certificate ordinary-level students should do three comparative texts. It is evident that teachers have high expectations and encourage students to reach their full potential but further opportunities to develop an interest in reading among students should be explored.
- The TY programme is broad and balanced and TY students are involved in many co-curricular activities. Students from all other year groups are also given opportunities to become involved in a range of co-curricular activities that enhances their experience of English.
- The teachers of English are experienced and capable. They bring with them different skill sets that should now be harnessed to further develop the entire department and student cohort. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers should collaborate further and share teaching ideas and resources at their English meetings.
- Planning for individual lessons was very good and the teachers kept very good records of their work and their students' work.

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.

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