

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of English**  
**REPORT**

**Gairmscoil Éinne**  
**Cill Rónáin, Oileáin Árann, Contae na Gaillimhe**  
**Roll number: 71300M**

**Date of inspection: 13 March 2012**



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

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

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	13 March 2012
<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 five class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- Overall, teaching was very good and learning ranged from adequate to excellent.
- The school is commended for its flexible approach to supporting students with additional educational needs.
- There is generally strong uptake at higher level for senior cycle English and good achievement at that level.
- Good to very good quality written formative feedback was being given by teachers to students in the sample of copies reviewed.
- While timetable provision for Transition Year (TY) and senior cycle English is very good, provision for junior cycle English is only adequate at present.
- High quality teacher preparation was observed in all lessons and very detailed schemes of work have been prepared for all year groups. However, there is still some scope for development in some schemes.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- More explicit and sustained development of students' process approach to writing and more consistent setting of creative intervention assignments are needed to support even higher student literacy achievement.
- The existing scheme of work for first-year English should be revised to build more explicitly on the prior knowledge and skills students should have developed by the end of their primary schooling. Also, more incremental development of students' literacy skills should be planned between the first and second-year schemes of work.
- The TY English scheme should provide a qualitatively different experience to that of senior cycle study.
- Every effort should be made to ensure that students are taught by subject-specialist teachers of English.

## **INTRODUCTION**

Gairmscoil Éinne is an island vocational school in the Gaeltacht with an enrolment of 78. The school offers the following programmes: the Junior Certificate, a compulsory TY, established Leaving Certificate (LC), and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). A small number of students from mainland schools attend Gairmscoil Éinne for TY only, as part of Scéim na bhFoghlaimoirí Gaeilge.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Examples of excellent teaching practices observed included explicit sharing of learning outcomes with students at the start of lessons, effective use of differentiation and information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning, pair and group work to stimulate active learning, and very strategic examination technique instruction. A consistent feature of lessons observed was that learning was taking place in print-rich environments.
- Learning ranged from adequate to excellent. Areas for development included not teaching poems to junior cycle students that they would be likely to encounter again on the prescribed leaving certificate list; increased utilisation of creative intervention tasks as homework; and, in one instance, the setting of an adequate number of substantial writing assignments.
- Very good interpersonal relations exist between teachers and students in all classes.
- The school is commended for its flexible approach to supporting students with additional educational needs and for enabling some students to attain Further Education and Training Awards Council (FETAC) certification where that is deemed more appropriate to their needs.
- High expectations are promoted by the fact that levels for certificate examinations are not chosen by students until third year of junior cycle.
- There is generally strong uptake at higher level for senior cycle English and good achievement at that level.
- To further strengthen students' literacy skills, teachers should engage in explicit modelling for students of drafting, editing and rewriting skills using ICT and should require students to draft and redraft substantial compositions using ICT from time to time. Also, it is advised that regular comprehension work based on current affairs reportage, interlinked with personal writing tasks, regularly feature in student learning. Finally, broadening the modes of assessment to offer a percentage of marks toward end-of-term examinations for tasks such as spelling tests, composition work, and book reviews on texts read by students independently could be considered.
- Homework is set and corrected. Good to very good quality written formative feedback was being given by teachers to students in the sample of copies reviewed. While criteria for assessment are used to comment on senior cycle student work, it is advised that they also be used with junior cycle groups to aid self and peer assessment. Also, it is recommended that actual errors arising in samples of student work be used to deliver contextualised instruction in the mechanics of language, rather than over-relying on textbooks for this area of skills development.

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

- Very good supports for English provided by the school include fast-speed broadband, laptops for all teachers, a book rental scheme, and netbooks for first and second years.
- Timetable provision for TY and senior cycle English is very good. Increasing provision for junior cycle to one period per day should be prioritised.
- Activities organised within the school commendably foster students' skills and interest in English. These include trips to dramatic performances, TY students' staging of a musical or drama, teachers' encouragement of library visits, and the organisation of workshops with visiting writers.
- English should, where possible, be taught by teachers who are subject specialists.
- The fact that teachers of English travel to the mainland to attend evening inputs on the subject in their own time testifies to their professionalism and to their commitment to their students.
- The teachers of English are advised to deepen their understanding of the prior knowledge and skills students should have developed by the end of their primary schooling, to aid the review of the first-year scheme of work.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- High quality teacher preparation was observed in all lessons and very detailed schemes of work have been prepared for all year groups. Strengths of the current subject department plan include varied text choices for senior cycle comparative studies and good elaboration of the teaching methods associated with planned content in the schemes. However, there is still some scope for further development in the subject department plan.
- The department is advised to revise its first and second-year schemes of work, so that the incremental development of students' literacy skills is more firmly established and that the range of poems selected for both years avoids introducing texts that students are likely to encounter again at senior cycle.
- A large proportion of the current TY plan focuses on textual study of LC material. While it is permitted to engage with LC material during TY, this should be done in a manner that is qualitatively different from that of senior cycle study. Incorporating different methodologies such as student projects and the compilation of a portfolio of drafts and redrafts of compositional work is recommended. So too is more explicit cross-curricular linking with other relevant TY modules offered in the school, such as the multi-media and radio skills modules.

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.