

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of ENGLISH
REPORT**

**Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin
An Cheathrú Rua, Contae na Gaillimhe
Roll number: 81012N**

Date of inspection: 26 March 2015



**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	25 and 26 March 2015
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 five class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The teachers of English are actively engaged with continuing professional development (CPD) courses in the subject.
- Very good relationships exist between teachers and students.
- In recent years, higher-level uptake rates in the subject have been rising steadily.
- In almost all cases, teaching and learning ranged from good to very good, with excellent practices observed in some lessons.
- School management is commended for adopting a mixed-ability class formation practice for all junior cycle students. This move away from stand-alone classes for Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) candidates requires some pedagogical changes, as described below.
- While good progress has been made with regard to subject department planning, there is still more scope for development in this area.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- During each subject department meeting, teachers should allocate some time for formally sharing a teaching method or resource that individuals have found effective.
- To further advance subject department planning for English, the teachers need to revise the department's existing schemes of work as advised in this report and to engage in annual, targeted action planning for the subject.
- To support the range of abilities in classes, the department should seek to consistently incorporate "learning to learn" tools, differentiation, and assessment for learning (AfL) strategies into the teaching and learning of the subject.

INTRODUCTION

Scoil Chuimsitheach Chiaráin, situated in the Connemara Gaeltacht, operates under the Association of Community and Comprehensive Schools (ACCS). It is a co-educational comprehensive school with a current enrolment of 295. The curricular programmes offered by the school are Junior Certificate, Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), compulsory Transition Year (TY), Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme. The school also participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department's action plan for educational inclusion.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The teachers of English possess deep levels of knowledge and enthusiasm for their subject.
- Students were affirmed and encouraged for their contributions in every class.
- Teaching ranged from good to very good. Practices observed in a few lessons that were very good included the use of digital clips and of careful questioning to help students see connections between studied texts, their lives, and texts previously studied. Also, an explicit vocabulary development approach was observed in some classes, integrating dictionary usage, word banks, and the pre-teaching and reinforcement of keywords through sentence generation and/or cloze test exercises. These practices are commended and should be consistently adopted across the department.
- In almost all cases, learning ranged from good to very good. Methodologies observed that commendably enabled students to critically engage with studied material in an active way included hot-seating and well-structured pair/group tasks. In one instance, where learning was less than satisfactory, there was an over-reliance on teacher talk and on whole-class questioning focused on lower-order information recall and comprehension tasks.
- The teachers of English report that they have good access to computer rooms in the school. It is encouraged that the department bring students to the computer rooms from time to time, to strengthen their process approach to writing and help develop their collections of texts.
- The department engages in some assessment for learning (AfL) practices such as allocating a percentage of marks for TY projects toward end-of-term reports and surveying third-year students to elicit feedback and suggestions for improvement on their experiences of English. Building on this work, it is recommended that the department adopt two additional AfL approaches. The first is sharing learning intentions with students at the outset of lessons and then checking for understanding and also for areas still causing difficulty at the end of lessons. The second is teachers' use of criteria for assessment when marking and providing formative feedback on substantial writing tasks.
- Among the tools that teachers used in lessons to explicitly support students' learning were a graphic organiser and a teacher-produced text support booklet. It is recommended that such tools be consistently utilised across the department. Compiling website addresses for digital resources relevant to particular topics and then providing them to students would be another effective support for revision purposes and for more able students interested in doing further research on topics.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Whole-school supports for English include very good timetable provision for the subject at both junior and senior cycle, the provision of teacher-based classrooms, and a subsidised iPad provision scheme for staff.
- Higher-level uptake rates in the subject have been rising steadily in recent years.
- In the past, junior cycle students were organised into two mixed-ability base classes and one small additional class for JCSP candidates. In 2014/15, school practice changed. Now all first-year students are organised into two mixed-ability class groups, with all students included in the school's JCSP. It is planned that this class formation model will roll forward into second and third year.
- To support the range of abilities in junior cycle classes, it is advised that the department engage in more detailed planning for differentiated resources (such as audio books) and for differentiated methodologies such as structured co-operative learning and possibly for some team-teaching supports.
- Students' interest in reading is promoted by the inclusion of some reading classes in the first-year programme and by the requirement for some students to prepare book reviews. It is advised that a visit to the local public library be included in the first-year scheme of work, to promote library usage for borrowing and for research.
- Co-curricular and extra-curricular activities are organised within the school which foster students' skills and interests in English.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Strengths in the current subject department planning process include good analysis of level uptake and attainment rates in the subject, review and adjustment in relation to the TY course for English, and integrating new learning gleaned from CPD courses into the plan. The work of the subject co-ordinator in recording minutes of meetings and in annually updating schemes of work is very professional and is highly commended.
 - The teachers of English regularly discuss aspects of subject delivery informally. Building on this culture, it is recommended that at the beginning of each subject department meeting, time should be formally allocated for individuals to present a resource or strategy they use in their practice or have gained from further study.
 - To aid subject planning into the future, the current tabular layout should be updated to incorporate headings such as learning outcomes, texts, methodologies and assessment modes. Reviewing online resources available on such websites as Junior Cycle for Teachers would support planning for first, second, and third year schemes of work in line with the new subject specification.
 - Formal self-evaluation by the department should also be recorded as a guide to annual, targeted action planning for ongoing subject improvement.
-

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.

Published December 2015