An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Coláiste Lorcáin
Castledermot, Co. Kildare
Roll number: 70670R

Date of inspection: 14 December 2010
REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

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<th>13 and 14 December, 2010</th>
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<td>• Discussion with principal</td>
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SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are the main findings of the evaluation:

- The quality of teaching and learning was overall good and, in some cases, was excellent.
- A variety of teaching methodologies was in use, and teachers put much thought into planning their lessons.
- Reading is promoted and students’ verbal skills are developed from first year.
- English homework was assigned frequently and was very well corrected in almost all lessons. To build on this good practice, the English homework policy should include guidelines on the frequency of assigning longer pieces of work and should focus on developing the writing process.
- The English department is very well resourced and information and communication technology (ICT) was used very well to enhance student interest and learning.
- Very good, purposeful, collaborative and reflective planning was in evidence.

As a means of building on strengths and to address areas for development, the following key recommendations are made:

- Management should increase provision of English lessons weekly at junior cycle.
- Consideration should be given to continuation of mixed-ability classes at least until the end of second year.
- In their annual review, the department should re-evaluate aspects of the junior cycle programme, particularly at ordinary level.
INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Lorcáin is a co-educational, second-level school, under the auspices of County Kildare Vocational Education Committee (VEC), and has an enrolment of 374 students. The school offers Transition Year (TY) (optional) and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) as well as the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate. The English inspection took place over two days and all five English teachers were observed. A meeting was also held with the special educational needs (SEN) co-ordinator. 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.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was overall good and, in some cases, excellent. Well planned lessons resulted in very good student participation, collaboration and engagement. The best practice was seen when students’ personal responses were encouraged. In a minority of lessons more opportunities for student discussion and collaboration should have been utilised.
- Teachers’ individual preparation of lessons was very good and there was much evidence of excellent preparation of teaching resources that enhanced teaching and made lessons active and enjoyable.
- Very good and varied use of ICT made lessons stimulating and enhanced learning.
- In all lessons, the learning outcome was clearly articulated and realised and continuity with other lessons was evident. There was a good structure and an appropriate pace to most lessons.
- Teachers were very good models of language. Very good integration of language and literature was observed.
- There were good questioning techniques observed. In lessons where teachers asked directed rather than global questions there was greater student participation. Higher-order questions challenged students to think more deeply about their answers.
- High expectations were set and realised in all lessons.
- The school-wide policy of assigning homework five minutes before lessons ended was very effective. There was much evidence of English homework being assigned frequently and being very well corrected in almost all lessons. To build on this good practice and to ensure consistency of practice, the English homework policy should stipulate the frequency of assigning longer pieces of work and focus on the writing process. In addition, self and peer assessment should be further encouraged, particularly to correct mechanical errors.
- The policy of all students having hardback or manuscript copies is effective as these were maintained to a high standard.
- The enthusiasm of teachers for their subject and their students’ learning was reflected in enthusiastic students who worked hard with their teachers. There was a good classroom atmosphere, good relationships and classrooms were well managed.
• Most classrooms were print-rich and therefore stimulating learning environments.

**SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

• Each junior cycle year group has just four lessons each week of thirty-five or forty minutes duration. This provision is unsatisfactory and it is therefore recommended that management make every effort to increase provision at junior cycle. Provision improves at senior cycle as each year group (including TY) has five English lessons weekly.

• English teachers make very good use of concurrence on the timetable from second year, not only for moving students between levels but also for team teaching. This year there are some timetabling anomalies but these are unlikely to recur, according to management.

• First-year class groups are mixed ability and students are then banded from second year. There is a predominance of boys in ordinary-level class groups. Teachers and management should consider the continuation of mixed ability at least until the end of second year. The assignment of students to higher-level and ordinary-level classes at senior cycle is appropriate.

• There is good liaison between the English department and the SEN department and this ensures that students are adequately supported.

• The positive results of the recent whole school in-service on assessment for learning were evident in many lessons. Students are tested regularly on a formal basis and continuous assessment is also in use. Common tests for English across year groups are implemented where appropriate.

• Management annually presents an analysis of results in the state examinations to staff. The English department should track uptake of levels from year to year to identify trends.

• The English department is very well resourced with teacher-based rooms, good ICT facilities, including laptops for all teachers. There is good student access to the library.

• All English teachers are appropriately qualified and deployed.

• Continuing professional development is encouraged and availed of.

**PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

• The department is well coordinated, collaborative and reflective. It meets regularly and shares expertise and resources. Very good, purposeful planning was in evidence.

• The department’s subject plans include the identification of the learning outcomes that each year group should achieve. Work is reviewed on an annual basis. In their next review, it is recommended that teachers review the junior cycle programme, particularly aspects of the ordinary-level programme, to ensure that there is a clear sense of an incremental approach to learning between junior and senior cycle.

• The TY plan for English covers a broad range of genres and modules and is active and contemporary in focus. Good cross-curricular planning was in evidence in all years.

• There is good promotion of purposeful reading from first year. Student project work is encouraged and there is a very good focus on developing students’ verbal skills through
encouraging debating and public speaking, and through the public access to law module in TY. The very strong focus on co-curricular activities brings the subject to life for students.

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.

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