

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of English  
REPORT**

**Coláiste Chathail Naofa  
Dungarvan, County Waterford  
Roll number: 72220T**

**Date of inspection: 21 September 2012**



**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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	20 and 21 September 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 seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The quality of teaching observed was good or very good, with many instances of very effective and supportive classroom practice.
- Students participated well in the lessons observed, and some very perceptive responses were noted.
- Students' written work and levels of attainment, while sometimes very good, broadly indicated rather low levels of application and a need for higher expectations of themselves.
- There is excellent provision for English on the school timetable and the subject is generally well resourced, although there is no dedicated English classroom.
- Subject planning is characterised by strategic and reflective practice; there is scope to further develop year plans.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should continue to offer students support and encouragement, while setting appropriately high standards for students' application and commitment to improving their work.
  - The objective of raising students' attainment should be shared and discussed with students and parents as well as teachers, as it will require the involvement of the whole school community.
  - Ways of optimising the existing classrooms as stimulating learning environments, and the possibility of creating a dedicated English classroom or classrooms should be explored.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Chathail Naofa is a co-educational school maintained by County Waterford Vocational Education Committee, with an enrolment of 150 students from Dungarvan and surrounds. It also has a sizeable further education section. The school offers a range of programmes including the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme, but not Transition Year. In 2002 it was among the schools chosen for the JCSP Demonstration Library Project. The school participates in the Department's DEIS initiative to deliver equality of opportunity in schools.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Seven lessons were observed during the evaluation, covering all years, levels and programmes and involving all members of the English department. The quality of teaching observed was good or very good, and many instances of very effective practice were noted.
- Clear outcomes had been planned for each lesson and for the most part these were achieved. Lesson pace and structure were effective and lesson activities were planned and sequenced with the needs of students in mind.
- The texts selected and the varied approaches taken engaged students and encouraged responses from them. First-year students had the use of individual tablet devices, with e-textbooks, through a locally-sponsored initiative. These have great potential as teaching and learning tools to extend and reinforce students' language skills.
- Teachers used specific questions and general discussion to help students make links between their experiences and the topics and themes being explored. Teachers should pay particular attention to follow-on questions to prompt students towards more detailed and well-supported oral response. This approach would also prepare students for subsequent writing tasks.
- Evidence of learning in the lessons observed included recall of prior learning; the ability to link it with new learning; understanding new information and concepts; and successful completion of lesson tasks. Many instances of increasing engagement and perceptive comment from students were observed as lessons progressed.
- A wide range of student ability and attainment was evident. Data giving students' reading ages has been collated; this is best used to inform teachers about the most suitable materials and methods for these students. The cohort includes some accomplished readers and writers; more general strengths included the freshness and honesty of students' responses, and the genuine engagement evident in the questions they asked. However, low levels of writing skills were evident in some of the student work seen.
- Teachers have identified the need for students to produce better-structured and more substantial written work. It would be useful to source or create templates and models to be shared and adapted, so that students can practise and consolidate the relevant writing skills. Creative modelling is recommended as an effective means by which students can gain understanding of various genres of writing and produce more purposeful and confident written work themselves.
- Teachers created a very supportive learning environment in all lessons and student behaviour was exemplary. Teachers were very pleased that students volunteered

responses so readily during the inspection. The level of participation observed reflects very well on students and indicates their respect for their teachers.

- While classroom management was uniformly good, the conventional seating layout in all classrooms visited limited the possibilities for students to interact with each other. Classroom layout could be usefully discussed at whole-staff level by the teachers who use the general classrooms.
- Students' copybooks and folders contained a good volume of work for the most part, of varying levels of proficiency. Teachers provided helpful developmental comment in a number of instances, and this practice should be extended in the case of all substantial assignments. Where improvements and corrections are identified, students should carry them out carefully. Their ownership of and responsibility for their own work should be increasingly emphasised as they progress through the school.

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

- There is excellent provision for English on the school timetable both in the number and distribution of lessons. A timetabled library lesson is a positive feature of junior cycle provision.
- The school has moved substantially from streaming to mixed ability in recent times; this is commendable. The present system of maintaining mixed-ability class groups for English until the formation of upper and lower bands in third year should lead to raised expectations and attainment, and progress in this regard should be tracked. A concerted effort, with the co-operation of parents and students, to reduce the numbers opting for foundation level would be a most worthwhile initiative.
- Relevant whole-school in-service on mixed-ability teaching and differentiation has taken place, and ways to further develop and share good practice should be considered. The possibility of developing a team-teaching arrangement in the junior cycle could be investigated, for instance. If well planned and delivered, team-teaching would facilitate differentiation and provide support to both very able and less able students.
- The library is a very well-used resource, and very good co-operation exists between the librarian and the English department. Notwithstanding this, a dedicated English classroom would be a very useful resource.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Subject planning is informed by and integrated with DEIS and JCSP planning, and with the school's literacy strategy. A recent reading survey conducted among students indicates the school's capacity to engage in self-evaluation and strategic planning.
- Strengths in the subject plan include a clear statement of aims and objectives. Building on the collaborative practice evident, the English department should identify specific learning outcomes for each year. These are best expressed in terms of what students must, should and could know and be able to do. This approach would support differentiation and ensure that planning has a direct link to teaching and learning processes.
- There is one Leaving Certificate class group, of mixed levels, in both fifth and sixth year, along with an LCA group. Careful planning of a combined higher/ordinary level course is

required to ensure that students opt for, and are supported to pursue, the level most suited to their ability.

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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 of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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