

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of English
REPORT**

**Dunshaughlin Community College
Dunshaughlin, County Meath
Roll number: 71960I**

Date of inspection: 16 October 2014



**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	14, 16 October 2014
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 eight class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons observed was very good or good with some instances of excellent practice; however, there were some lessons where students' learning was not adequately progressed.
- Students were encouraged to take responsibility for their own learning in many lessons.
- Excellent team-teaching practice was observed.
- Classroom atmosphere was positive and students were cooperative and very well behaved.
- Very good self-assessment and peer-assessment practices were observed in some lessons.
- Analysis of student attainment is used to inform subject department planning.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the interests of developing the potential of all students, teachers should consider maintaining mixed-ability class groups throughout the junior cycle.
 - Common end-of term and end-of-year exams should be set for all years and levels where practicable.
 - Teachers should review and update the action plan for English and should further develop the subject plan to link learning outcomes with skills development and assessment within defined timeframes.
 - The Transition Year (TY) plan should be progressed and should have a clear focus on skills development in line with Department of Education and Skills (DES) guidelines.
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INTRODUCTION

Dunshaughlin Community College is administered by the Louth and Meath Education and Training Board and has an enrolment of 402 girls and 603 boys. The school offers the Leaving Certificate, Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) and Junior Certificate programmes and an optional TY.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning in the majority of lessons observed was very good or good with some instances of excellent practice; however, there were some lessons where students' learning was not adequately progressed.
- All lessons had a clear purpose and, in most cases, this was communicated to the students in terms of planned learning outcomes. Very good practice was seen where the planned outcomes were revisited by the teacher and students at the end of the lesson to evaluate the learning achieved. This practice should be extended to all lessons.
- In most lessons, resources supported learning and skills development. Practice was observed, however, where the teaching materials did not contribute to the attainment of the stated learning outcomes. When preparing for lessons, teachers should ensure that the selected resources support the planned learning.
- Lessons generally included a range of methodologies to engage students and encourage them to take responsibility for their own learning. Some exemplary group work practice was observed. In a small number of lessons, students were largely passive and were not engaged with learning.
- In many lessons, teachers used comprehension strategies which facilitated students being active in their own learning. In some instances, there was scope to introduce more differentiation through scaffolding or additional prompts to ensure full participation by all students.
- Excellent team-teaching practice was observed where there was carefully planned and seamless interaction between the teachers. This resulted in students benefiting from the combined expertise of two subject specialists. All opportunities to increase student learning and engagement through the use of team teaching should be fully exploited.
- Classroom atmosphere was positive and students were cooperative and very well behaved.
- Some classrooms had stimulating and attractive displays of both subject-specific posters and students' own work. The celebration of students' achievement in this way is highly commended.
- In most lessons, homework was given. However, inconsistencies were observed in the manner in which homework was assigned and recorded. Teachers should develop a consistent approach to the assignment, recording and assessment of homework for all students, including those in TY.
- Good formative feedback was seen in many copybooks. To ensure students derive full benefit from developmental commentary, teachers could implement techniques to direct and support students' engagement with feedback.

- Very good self-assessment and peer-assessment practices were observed in some lessons. These practices which support students in taking an active role in their own learning are commended.
- In many lessons, particular attention was paid to the extension of students' vocabulary including subject-specific terminology. Literacy development is also supported through the tutorial period at the start of the day where a word of the day is introduced to all students.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for English is good in senior-cycle and third-year, with very good provision for sixth-year students who have six lessons each week. However, provision for English in the first two years of junior cycle and for LCA students should be reviewed with the objective of increasing the number of lessons in line with best practice.
- Learning support is provided for students through a number of models. Small group and one-to-one support is provided where appropriate. However, team teaching is the support model of choice at both senior and junior cycle. This is highly commended.
- Management is committed to extending concurrent timetabling to all years. This good practice provides opportunities for collaboration and extension of classroom activities.
- First-year students are organised in mixed ability groups. In second year, ordinary-level and higher-level groups are formed following a common assessment. In the interests of developing the potential of all students, teachers should consider maintaining mixed-ability class groups throughout the junior cycle.
- Higher-level and ordinary-level groups are formed in fifth year based on the results of a common assessment and with reference to student progress and commitment, junior certificate results and parental and student choice.
- First-year students have common summative assessments. This practice should be extended so that all years and levels have common end-of term and end-of-year exams
- The English department consists of dedicated and creative professionals. Their commitment to facilitating and enabling students' learning is highly commended.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The well-organised English subject folder includes minutes of meetings and, commendably, an action plan for the development of the department. It is now timely to review and update the action plan to reflect current priorities.
- The subject plan varies in the level of detail provided for each year. Further development of the subject plan for all years should focus on linking learning outcomes with skills development and assessment within defined timeframes
- The TY programme is currently under review. The new programme and plan should have a clear focus on skills development and, in line with DES guidelines, place an emphasis on challenging all students to develop as independent learners who are ready to take on the Leaving Certificate programme as well developed and reflective young adults.

- The use of analysis of student attainment to inform subject planning is highly commended. Further analysis could include the outcomes from in-house assessments and year-on-year progress for all 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. 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.