

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of ENGLISH
REPORT**

**Roscommon Community College
Lisnamult, Roscommon
Roll number: 72290R**

Date of inspection: 16 May 2013



**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

Date of inspection	16 May 2013
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 5 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The English department is hardworking, collaborative and innovative.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was well used in lessons.
- Teachers showed a keen awareness of students' individual learning needs and differentiated their practices accordingly.
- There was a good focus on literacy development in lessons, although the provision of a reading class to junior cycle groups for the full year should be reviewed in light of the less than satisfactory number of weekly English lessons in first and second year at present.
- Teachers used active methods in their lessons, but some lessons lacked in-depth teaching of critical skills.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- There is a need, in some cases, to introduce more challenge for students in lessons in order to develop their critical thinking skills.
 - Rather than giving students meanings of vocabulary and concepts in the first instance, teachers should try to elicit meanings from them.
 - Planning for English should be re-visited to broaden students' experience of English in third year and to ensure that fifth-year students can change levels without having to study different texts.
 - Management should explore the possibility of increasing provision of English lessons in first and second year and teachers should review the provision of a reading lesson each week.
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INTRODUCTION

Roscommon Community College is under the auspices of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board. It has an enrolment of 161 students and participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity for Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. At the time of the evaluation the English department was entirely staffed by temporary substitute teachers.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teachers had established good classroom routines with their students. These included sharing the intended learning outcomes at the start of each lesson and checking homework.
- In most cases, very good links were made with prior learning, thus putting learning in context and ensuring continuity of learning.
- Teachers used active teaching and learning methods. They also used a wide range of visual and aural stimuli. PowerPoint presentations were used effectively to demonstrate each stage of the lesson and exhibit key tasks.
- There was evidence of good student-teacher relations in all lessons and students were very well behaved. The atmosphere was pleasant in all lessons. This was enhanced by a stimulating classroom environment.
- The teachers were aware of the range of abilities in their lessons and of the students who had special educational needs (SEN) and used very good differentiation strategies throughout their lessons.
- In most lessons the teachers checked with students at the end to ensure that the learning intention was achieved. However, the learning intention in some lessons was not appropriate and did not lead to deep learning by the student cohort. In these lessons, students were busy and active, but the content and learning in the lesson was predominantly lower order and there was a lack of development of students' critical skills, and an absence of higher-order questioning and discussion. It is recommended that teachers ensure engagement of students in discussion on a frequent basis and that students are challenged to think critically.
- Questioning was best when students were named to answer questions. A hands' down policy should be adopted in lessons.
- Evidence of both literacy and numeracy development was observed in lessons. In some instances, key words were pre-taught at the start of the lesson which is good practice. However, in some lessons, the teachers told students the meaning of key vocabulary or gave students information, instead of inviting speculation and discussion as to possible meaning. It is recommended that students be asked as opposed to told meaning of key concepts and vocabulary. In addition, more opportunities for dictionary work should be utilised.

- Currently, a vocabulary notebook is used by each student to record new vocabulary learned in all subjects. It is suggested that students record vocabulary pertaining to English in a section of their English copy to maintain all subject-related vocabulary in one place.
- Writing tasks were frequently assigned and there was a good range of work in students' copies. Mechanical errors were well corrected and teachers provided some commentary to students on their longer pieces of work. However, there is scope to increase the amount of formative feedback given to students on their work. Students' work showed evidence of the integration of language and literature which is a very good strategy.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision of four lessons per week in first and second year is unsatisfactory, especially as all lessons are just thirty-five minutes in length. Provision improves in third year as there are five lessons weekly. The provision of a reading lesson a week in junior cycle and in TY further reduces teaching time. It is recommended that management explore the possibility of increasing provision for English at junior cycle. It is also recommended that the English department review the provision of a reading lesson each week in some junior cycle years.
- Provision improves in fifth year to five English lessons per week. English lessons are evenly distributed across the week.
- The teachers are highly committed to the subject, and provide a range of co-curricular activities for their students. These include poetry workshops, drama trips, writing competitions, radio productions and a literacy week.
- The school has a whole-school assessment policy and the practices regarding assessment are good. Reports are sent home four times each year based on both continuous assessment and examinations.
- There is good provision of resources for English. ICT provision is very good and there is a well-utilised library.
- There is good liaison with the SEN coordinator. A literacy plan is in place and includes a range of whole-school literacy strategies.
- English teachers have availed of a range of continuing professional development opportunities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The teachers work collaboratively and meet weekly to discuss provision and teaching of English.

- The English department subject folder provides comprehensive detailed planning material including detail on methodologies and assessment as well as topic and content.
- First-year students are provided with a comprehensive programme of work. The current practice is for the novel and play to be taught in second year. It is recommended that further literary material be introduced in third year as opposed to third year being predominantly a revision year. Students should also be given frequent opportunities to engage in personal writing throughout each year as opposed to concentrating on this aspect of the course for a particular period of time.
- Students have the opportunity to aim for their highest achievable level. Currently, the higher-level and ordinary-level fifth-year class groups study different novels and plays. When choosing texts for fifth year, teachers should ensure some overlap between the comparative and single study texts for each fifth-year class group and should coordinate the time they teach these texts to facilitate those students who wish to change level.
- All lessons were well prepared. Students are asked to review their experience of English by their teachers, which is good self-evaluation practice. Common tests are prepared where appropriate and good record keeping practices are in place. The English department has a very good homework policy.

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.