

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of ENGLISH
REPORT

Coláiste Naomh Feichín
Corr na Móna, Contae na Gaillimhe
Roll number: 71320S

Date of inspection: 27 January 2016



REPORT ON THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	27 January 2016
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 four class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The consistent integration of active learning strategies was noted in all lessons observed.
- Very strong promotion of personal reading has been undertaken by the teachers of English and school management over the years and the responses of a number of students in observed lessons indicated that this initiative is creating some thoughtful, incisive commentators.
- Teaching generally ranged from good to very good, though there was scope for development in some aspects of learning.
- There is very good timetable provision for the subject at both junior and senior cycle.
- Subject department planning is an area for development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Aspects of the teaching of writing should be further developed by teachers explicitly modelling the draft/redraft process and leading students to engage in peer and self-assessment of student-generated exemplars of standard using agreed success criteria.
 - Greater differentiation in lessons should be promoted through the revised sequencing of text coverage, through selective note provision, and through teaching students how to distil those notes using graphic organisers.
 - The department should plan collaboratively for delivery of the new Junior Cycle English specification.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Naomh Feichín is situated in the Seoighe Gaeltacht District in east Connemara on the border between Galway and Mayo. It is a co-educational school, operating under the auspices of Galway and Roscommon Education and Training Board (GRETb). It currently has an enrolment of 96 students. The curricular programmes offered by the school are Junior Certificate, Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Teachers are hard-working and are actively engaged with continuing professional development (CPD) courses in the subject.
- Teaching generally ranged from good to very good. Very good practices observed in different lessons included effective use of digital clips to support revision and good questioning that activated students' prior knowledge of concepts and that helped students make connections between studied English and Irish language poems of related themes.
- Very good interpersonal relations were evident between teachers and students.
- From the sample of student copies and folders evaluated, it was clear that students' work is being monitored and that written teacher formative feedback of varying depth is being provided on that work. It was clear that teachers were providing written affirmation and evaluation of substantial pieces of writing. In addition, they should also provide specific suggestions on how to improve the piece of work.
- To support even higher achievement in students' writing, students should be encouraged to keep a vocabulary notebook, where they would jot down words or phrases that strike them from studied texts and personal reading, and seek to use them in their own writing. Furthermore, it is recommended that teachers provide more explicit in-class modelling of the draft/redraft process.
- Some assessment for learning (AFL) strategies were utilised by teachers in lessons evaluated, including the sharing of learning intentions with students at the outset of lessons and recapping on them at the end. A useful strategy for promoting peer assessment observed in one class could very fruitfully be extended to all class groups. Students' peer and self-assessment skills should now be deepened by requiring them to respond to peer-generated exemplars of standard using agreed success criteria.
- Some good differentiation supports were in evidence such as the integration of active learning activities with teacher-led inputs and skilful in-class management of the correction of homework tasks that were set at different levels.
- To further support students in mixed-ability classes, it is recommended that a more selective approach to providing notes to students be adopted and that students be guided to use tools such as mindmaps and other graphic organisers to distil their notes in preparation for substantial writing tasks and examinations. A greater range of differentiated resources should also be gathered by the department to support the study of core texts. Such resources could include audiobooks and teacher-prepared resource booklets incorporating key moment timelines, character maps, and key quotation reference handouts.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Good quality subject provision was evident during the evaluation.
- One staff member teaches all junior cycle English and one senior cycle English class. The other staff member teaches the other two senior cycle English classes. Subject-combination and staffing factors are contributory to this arrangement. If both teachers of English were to experience teaching at junior level in the coming years, then that would support subject department planning work.
- There is very good timetable provision for the subject at both junior and senior cycle.
- All students study English in mixed-ability class groups from first to fifth year. School management's creation of separate higher and ordinary level class groups for sixth year English is a valuable aid to the study of prescribed texts for the different levels.
- Co-curricular activities such as the school Christmas play deepen students' interest and confidence in drama. A welcoming library has been created in the school, thanks to the vision and actions of the teachers of English and school management, to fundraising efforts, and to prizes accrued from the school winning first place in Ireland for M.S. Readathon participation for five consecutive years. It is also highly commended that a student committee advises on stock acquisitions and operates the library-lending software during borrowing periods.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- While the teachers of English individually engage in planning for their class groups, subject department planning is an area for development.
 - It is vital that the department collaboratively plans for delivery of the new JC English specification. While only one teacher is teaching junior cycle at present, circumstances could change from year to year, requiring the other staff member to teach junior students. Also, understanding the skills and experiences that students will acquire by the end of third year should significantly guide ongoing revisions of senior-cycle schemes.
 - Given that all classes of English are taught on a mixed-ability and mixed-level basis until the end of fifth year, planning to meet the individual needs of class groups needs to be the key driver of ongoing scheme construction. Action planning in response to student feedback on challenging areas of the English course and to trends in examination achievement should also be incorporated as an annual element of departmental planning.
 - With regard to junior cycle, the department needs to ensure that the sequence in which texts are introduced to students moves from the accessible to the challenging. With regard to senior cycle, it is suggested that an accessible entry-point to the course for mixed-level groups could be a focus on the composing section of the course. Furthermore, the practice of teaching all prescribed Leaving Certificate poetry in one year should be reviewed and that the time allocated to teaching different sections of the Leaving Certificate course be strategically linked to examination weightings.
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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 in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

Part B Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The main recommendations of the report are being implemented.

The draft/redraft process is being used as it was a key part of the Junior Cycle Course.

Students are being guided to use tools such as mind maps and graphic organisers to distil and organize their own work and notes. This includes the use of a vocabulary notebook.

The composing section of the Leaving Certificate Course will be used as an entry point to mixed ability Classes.

We will review the practice of poetry being studied in block format during Bliain 6. We will introduce poetry in Bliain 5 which is common to both higher and ordinary level from now on.