

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of English
REPORT**

**Coláiste Choilm
Ballincollig, County Cork
Roll number: 71103K**

Date of inspection: 9 December 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	1, 3, 5 & 9 December 2014
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, teachers and librarian• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during seventeen class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- There is a very good standard of teaching and learning in English.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively to support student learning.
- Group work and pair work were used very effectively.
- There were numerous examples of good practice in teachers' approach to assessment during the evaluation.
- Overall, there is very good provision for English on the school timetable.
- The school library is a powerful resource for supporting students' literacy development.
- The English department has a very strong commitment to continuing professional development.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Good practice observed in some lessons should be built upon through the incorporation of the explicit teaching of a variety of comprehension strategies in all teachers' practice with a particular focus on building on skills learned in primary school.
 - The English department should build on the very good practice in formative assessment observed in many lessons as a means of consolidating and advancing assessment expertise throughout the English team.
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INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Choilm is a co-educational school with a current enrolment of 1378 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate (Established) programme, and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. In addition, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme is offered to students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- There is a very good standard of teaching and learning in English. There are high expectations for students and lessons were conducted in a caring and happy atmosphere. The English department is well organised, with considerable effort having been expended in the gathering of resources relevant to teaching and learning in a departmental resource room.
- The use of ICT was observed regularly during the evaluation. This acted as an appropriate support for student learning. In addition, innovative use of tablet technology as a tool for students to engage with English work was observed.
- Group work and pair work were used very effectively during the evaluation and the development of students' oral language featured appropriately as part of teachers' practice. An area that may be worthy of consideration by the English department is the point at which students are explicitly taught how to work in groups. This would build upon a very high level of awareness within the English department of different co-operative learning strategies and on previously accessed continuing professional development (CPD). Beyond this, a stronger focus on active listening should be considered in the context of some lessons.
- A range of reading and writing activities was observed. In a number of instances, the development of collections of students' own written texts was underway. This is very good practice. The development of students' awareness of the writing process was also observed in a number of classrooms. Where tablet technology was used, good work in supporting the development of student writing was observed. However, in order to ensure support for handwriting and other skills, a balanced approach to the use of tablets by students should be maintained, so that they may also gain appropriate experience in handwritten work alongside the undoubted benefits of ICT.
- A very strong feature of teachers' practice was a focus on the development of students' vocabulary as a key part of their work in the subject. In addition, the use of online thesauruses was evident in some lessons and the department is encouraged to view this as a key resource to be taught and utilised in all English classes. The use of guided reading and other comprehension strategies such as text-marking was observed. It is recommended that this good practice be built upon through the incorporation of the explicit teaching of a variety of comprehension strategies in all teachers' practice with a particular emphasis on building on skills learned in primary school.
- The school corridors incorporate numerous displays linked to the promotion of language and literacy. There has been some development of learning environments in classrooms, but this is understandably impeded due to student movement between classrooms. The school is particularly encouraged to support these efforts. First-year class base rooms present as one possible initial focal point for such support.
- There were numerous examples of good practice in teachers' approach to assessment. The assignment and correction of writing was a consistent feature and was particularly effective

where feedback led to review and further action on the part of students. In addition, the use of specific commentary on the part of teachers to guide the further development of students' writing acted as an effective tactic to improve writing. Further very good practice was observed in the modelling of assessment using a tablet computer, and through the appropriate use of success criteria. It is recommended that the English department should build on current very good practice in formative assessment within the department as a means of consolidating and advancing assessment expertise throughout the English team. Student work and folders were maintained to a very good standard in English lessons observed.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Overall there is very good provision for English on the school timetable. In this context, there is scope, over time and within the constraints of available resources, for the school to move towards a limited expansion in the number of English lessons assigned to third year students, as outlined in circular letter 25/12.
- A particular feature of English for students in Coláiste Choilm is the very impressive range of extracurricular, co-curricular and cross-curricular activities provided by the English department. The school library is a well-developed facility with a wide range of texts and services. This is further supported through links to an eLeabharlann facility for which there has been strong uptake. The library has been used in a range of reading initiatives in junior cycle. It is a powerful resource in supporting students' literacy development.
- There is a very strong commitment to CPD within the English department. There has been considerable uptake of professional development opportunities across the department and a significant number of English teachers are currently undertaking, or have undertaken, postgraduate qualifications.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- The English department has very good communication structures and meets on a regular basis. The formation of sub-groups to address continuing areas for investigation and improvement is also a very strong feature of the department's practice. The school effectively supports meetings of the full department through a blocked system of subject meetings.
- Very professional work has been undertaken in the area of subject planning. The English department has engaged well with planning for junior cycle English. As a further development on work already undertaken, some adjustments to the plan should be considered. A more focused range of main learning outcomes for termly plans should be utilised to help to guide assessment and the development of skills in English. Beyond this, in first year, learning outcomes should be drawn in particular from those designated for study by first-year students in order to form a bridge to their learning in primary school.
- A Transition Year (TY) plan has been developed. This includes imaginative and worthwhile modules which are supportive of the further development of students' skills in English.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals 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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