

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT
Ardcoil Phádraig
Granard, Co. Longford
Roll number: 71710I

Date of inspection: 18 November 2013



AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF
OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION
AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS

**REPORT
ON
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH**

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Date of inspection	18 November 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 quality of teaching and learning ranged from good to very good.
- Teaching was particularly good where higher-order, critical thinking skills were developed.
- Students were very focused and participated well in their lessons.
- There was a good emphasis on the development of students' literacy skills in all lessons and a whole-school approach to literacy was in evidence.
- Some good assessment for learning strategies were in evidence in lessons and in the correction of students' work
- There is a whole-school focus on students being encouraged to reach their highest achievable level.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- In the junior cycle lessons observed, it is recommended that teachers ensure their class groups are encouraged to develop critical thinking skills, engage more deeply with texts. and that questioning move beyond lower order, recall type questions
- There is a need for more frequent written work to be assigned in a range of genres in some of the junior cycle lessons observed.
- It is recommended that the number of texts studied at junior cycle be expanded, especially in first year. Sixth-year students must study three comparative texts at ordinary as well as at higher level.
- A more even distribution of English lessons across the week is recommended for some year groups.

INTRODUCTION

Ardcoil Phádraig is a growing co-educational school with an enrolment of 209 students and is run under the auspices of Longford and Westmeath Education and Training Board. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity for Schools (DEIS) action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. The school provides the Junior and Leaving Certificate programmes, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme and Post-Leaving Certificate courses. There is an autism unit in the school.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning observed ranged from good to very good. Teachers outlined the intended learning outcomes of each lesson from the start, which gave the lessons a good structure. Learning outcomes were most appropriate when they were specific rather than too general. Teachers also consolidated learning at the end of each lesson.
- Teachers put the lesson content in context for students by creating effective links with students' life experiences and with other studied texts.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was utilised well in lessons. There was also a good focus on literacy development in the lessons observed including a key word approach, a focus on correct spelling, and, in some cases of very good practice, key words pertaining to the lesson being pre-taught. A number of whole-school reading initiatives are in place. Classrooms were stimulating learning environments.
- Good routines were established in all lessons and there was a focused and pleasant atmosphere in evidence. Student behaviour was exemplary. Students were fully engaged in their work and participated well in their lessons.
- In-depth learning was particularly evident at senior cycle. In these lessons texts were closely read, higher-order questions were asked of students, which led them to reflect on their work, and students were encouraged to defend their answers. Questioning tended to be more lower-order in the junior cycle lessons observed. These lessons would have benefited from more student debate and discussion. It is recommended that teachers focus more on developing students' critical literacy skills in these year groups.
- Teachers were inclusive of all students in most lessons. Pair work, whole-class discussion and naming students to answer questions were some of the strategies used to ensure that all students participated.
- While there was a good approach to teaching poetry, teachers would facilitate a greater student appreciation of poetry if they sought an overall reaction from students to a newly introduced poem prior to closely analysing the poem.
- In most lessons, an appropriate amount of work was evident in students' copybooks although more frequent assignment of work was recommended in one instance. Teachers should ensure that work is assigned in a range of genres throughout each term rather than focusing on just one aspect of the syllabus.
- Students maintained their written work well. In the senior cycle lessons observed, students were frequently assigned longer pieces of work. There was also a focus on

encouraging students' personal response in these lessons. In all lessons, students' work was well corrected and students were given very good written feedback on their work.

- An analysis of results in Certificate examinations in English indicates increasing student attainment. There is a strong whole-school focus on students being encouraged to reach their highest achievable level.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision for English is adequate but not generous at junior cycle. There are, however, commendable plans to increase English lessons for first years. Provision at senior cycle is good. Double lessons for LCA and first-year students should be avoided to allow for a more even distribution of English lessons across the week.
- Good assessment practices are in place in terms of both summative and formative assessment. Teachers set common tests as appropriate. Consideration might be given to an element of continuous assessment of students' work as part of their end of term tests.
- Most teachers have their own classrooms and all classrooms have appropriate ICT facilities. Net books have been introduced for first years.
- A reading room has recently been developed in the school which is being stocked with appropriate reading material, and is well utilised. A mobile library is also in use.
- Teachers are commended for availing of a range of continuing professional development opportunities.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There is good practice among the English teachers in terms of collaborative subject planning. The subject plan contains key documents pertaining to English and consists of three different sets of plans for each year group: one with specific learning outcomes for each year group, one with the aims for each cycle and one outlining the schemes of work for each group. These should be integrated together into a single document for each year group.
- Agreement of common texts by teachers ensures that students can move levels if necessary.
- The commendable literacy and numeracy plan identifies key literacy strategies and targets although these targets could be made more specific.
- In junior cycle, students formally study one novel and one play over the course of three years. While it is acknowledged that students read a range of books during reading class in first year, it is recommended that they be given the opportunity to formally study a novel and that the number of texts on the junior cycle course be broadened. In addition, Leaving Certificate ordinary-level students must study three comparative texts.
- Evidence of engagement with school self evaluation was seen in one instance in the form of individual teacher appraisal of lessons. This is highly commended. It is recommended that teachers formally review the English plan and target specific areas for development on an annual basis.

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, and the response of the board will be found in the appendix of this report.

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Appendix

School response to the report

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1: Observations on the content of the inspection report.

The quality of teaching receives positive comment in the report and this is very affirming for the teachers of English. The teachers are very happy that the whole-school focus on students being encouraged to reach their highest achievable level is noted in the report.

Area 2: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

The Board of Management of Ardscoil Phádraig wish to confirm that the English Department have successfully undertaken a One book, one Community project in conjunction with local primary schools and education centres to boost literacy and interest in reading as confirmed with the Inspector at the time of the Inspection.

Provision has also been made by the English Department for students to study at least three texts at Junior Certificate.

Ardscoil Phádraig school management are intending to allocate more classes for Junior Certificate English starting from September 2014.