

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of English  
REPORT**

**St Fanahan's College  
Mitchelstown, County Cork  
Roll number: 71040M**

**Date of inspection: 10 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Date of inspection</b>	10 May 2013
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during two class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- There was a very good standard of teaching observed during the evaluation.
- Classroom management was of a very good standard.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was used effectively to support teaching and learning during the evaluation.
- English teachers have displayed considerable commitment to the creation of vibrant learning environments in their base classrooms.
- There is a school library which is used, in conjunction with a number of reading initiatives, to support students' engagement with reading.
- There is very good collaboration within the English department.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- The explicit teaching of comprehension strategies should be incorporated in the department's practice.
  - The school should move towards the provision of five English lessons per week in junior cycle, as soon as possible.
  - It is important that current approaches towards the formation of first-year class groups be kept under consistent and careful review.
  - The study of three comparative texts in ordinary level Leaving Certificate classes should be noted as policy and practice in the subject plan.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Saint Fanahan's College has a current enrolment of 159 students and participates in the DEIS action plan. The school provides the following programmes: the Junior Certificate, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), the Leaving Certificate (Established), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) Programme. A number of Post-Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses are also offered.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- There was a very good standard of teaching observed during the evaluation. Lessons were very well-prepared. Classroom management was of a very good standard. The relationship between teachers and students was very good. The objectives of lessons were clear.
- ICT and photocopied resources were used effectively during the evaluation. The English department is aware of potential advantages connected with the use of online learning platforms and has begun to investigate how these might be adopted to support student learning. In addition, the possible use of tablet computers is currently being examined. In one instance, the impact of ICT resources was somewhat impeded due to light conditions. In this context it is recommended that the provision of blinds for some classrooms should be investigated by school management.
- Reading and writing activities featured as elements in lessons observed during the evaluation. These incorporated the use of a range of reading and writing activities to support students' engagement with and comprehension of texts. As a small extension of current practice, it is recommended that the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies should be incorporated in the department's practice. In addition, it is positive that the modelling of reading and writing is an important element of the department's practice and this should be noted in the subject plan.
- Homework was regularly assigned and monitored in classes observed during the evaluation, with formative commentary in evidence. Notes copies were maintained and folders in JCSP lessons were well-organised. It is suggested that this approach, incorporating the storage of student work and resources in classroom folders, could usefully be extended to senior cycle class groups as a support for revision work.
- There were some examples of the use of an integrated approach to the language and literature syllabuses in students' written work. To consolidate and extend this work, it is recommended that an integrated approach should be incorporated in the subject plan and adopted as an important element in classroom practice.
- English teachers have displayed considerable commitment to the creation of vibrant learning environments in their base classrooms. These environments incorporated impressive displays of student work, classroom libraries and educational posters. This work is strongly endorsed and it is suggested that it should be supported through a clear policy statement in the English department plan.

## **SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT**

- At present there is good provision for English on the school timetable in fifth year and in sixth year. In junior cycle, classes in first year, second year and third year are provided with four English lessons per week. While it is recognised that some of these lessons are

of forty-five minutes duration, it is recommended that the school should move towards the provision of five English lessons per week, in line with the recommendations in circular letter 25/12, as soon as possible. This is particularly important in the context of support for students with difficulties in literacy development. This recommendation is made with a recognition of the constraints of available resources.

- Currently an assessment test is administered to students upon entry to identify particular learning needs. Different class groups are formed on the basis of ability, but provision is made for student movement between classes in second and third year, to support participation in higher level English, where appropriate. While at present this arrangement suits the school context, it is important that its impact on student experiences and aspirations be kept under consistent and careful review. This is of particular importance in view of the need to maintain high expectations and in recognition of the early stage of students' development at which these decisions are currently made.
- There is a school library and this is used to support student reading and as a location for work by the English department in enhancing students' reading ability. Initiatives such as wordmillionaire and strategies to support vocabulary development are also organised in connection with the school's JCSP planning team.
- The English department has displayed its commitment to continuing professional development (CPD) and information and good practice acquired at CPD events is disseminated through informal discussion and inclusion in the subject folder.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- There is a professional and committed English department in place. A subject co-ordinator is appointed on a rotational basis. There is very good collaboration within the department. Minutes of formal departmental meetings are stored in the department folder and it is suggested that this practice should now incorporate the use of ICT to facilitate storage and ease of access.
- A subject plan has been developed which comprises a comprehensive representation of the work of the department. A wide range of resources has been collated, and time-linked plans have been developed. Of particular note in the work of the English department is the use of self-evaluation sheets to review the success of, and potential for improvement in, the different modules taught each year. This is a clear expression of the professional approach adopted by the department to its work.
- Students are exposed to a wide range of texts in junior cycle. In senior cycle there is evidence of a varied approach to the choice of texts to be studied. It is recommended that, as part of the subject department plan, the study of three comparative texts in ordinary level class groups undertaking the Leaving Certificate should be noted as policy and practice. This should be done in order to ensure the requirements of the syllabus are met.
- The school has displayed considerable commitment to students in the LCA by ensuring the programme is available for those students to whom it is most suited. In the context of the English and Communication programme the department is encouraged to continue to consider the inevitable implications of the necessary combining of LCA1 and LCA2 groups, within the relevant confines of resources and class context.

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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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