

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Ó Fiaich College
Dundalk, County Louth
Roll number: 71770D

Date of inspection: 7 February 2012



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:	6 and 7 February 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 10 class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in almost all lessons observed.
- A positive and caring approach to the students was in evidence in all lessons.
- The subject is well coordinated and there was evidence of regular review of policies and practices at individual and department level.
- English teachers collaborate very well to share ideas and resources.
- Students benefit from frequent written work and good feedback on this work. The texts chosen for study are also suitable and adequately bridge the gap between junior and senior cycle.
- It is commendable that recommendations from previous English inspection reports have been implemented.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that teachers ask more questions of individual students.
 - It is recommended that English lessons be timetabled concurrently in second year to facilitate movement between levels.
 - It is recommended that all suitably qualified teachers be provided with opportunities to teach all years and levels.
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INTRODUCTION

Ó Fiaich College operates under the management of County Louth Vocational Education Committee (VEC) and comprises a post-primary college and an Institute of Further Education that provides Post Leaving Certificate (PLC) courses, mostly at level 5. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan for educational inclusion. The second level school has a current enrolment of 355 students and there is a total of 969 students enrolled in the college. The school offers the full range of programmes which includes the option of Transition Year (TY) for some students.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching and learning was good in almost all lessons. Good preparation led to good lesson structure. Teaching resources such as Information and Communication Technology (ICT), the board and worksheets varied classroom activity, kept students' attention and supported learning.
- The aim of each lesson was clearly articulated from the start and, in some instances, teachers checked again at the end of the lesson to ensure that the aim had been achieved.
- Teachers linked their lessons with other aspects of the students' course and many also pre-taught key vocabulary and key points. Teachers took many opportunities to reinforce learning.
- There was good student participation in all lessons. In second-level lessons, this was mainly achieved through peer learning activities. FETAC learners were also observed to make class presentations which were followed by question-and-answer sessions. Where students genuinely worked collaboratively there was evidence of very good sharing of ideas. This facilitated discussion and also allowed the teacher to circulate to help individual students.
- Some teachers tended to ask questions globally of the entire class as opposed to naming individuals to answer questions. It is recommended that all teachers adopt the practice of asking directed questions. Best practice in questioning was seen when teachers directed their questions at individual students and when a range of lower and higher-order questions was used. This latter practice was effective in challenging and engaging all students.
- Good classroom management supported teaching and learning, and teachers are commended for maintaining positive classroom relations. It was evident throughout the evaluation that teachers are positive and caring towards their students.
- Many classrooms had displays of key words and were print rich. It is recommended, in classrooms which are teacher based, that students' work be displayed to give them a sense of pride in their work.
- Good examples of the integration of language and literature were observed and there was also a commendable focus on precision in spelling in many lessons.
- Homework was assigned in all lessons and it was noteworthy that it was assigned in good time for all students to record it in their journals.
- It is commendable that students receive frequent practice in extended pieces of writing. Students received good written feedback which identified strengths and areas for improvement. Criteria for assessment are used by some teachers when correcting work at

senior cycle. It is recommended that the practice be extended to junior cycle so that students understand where they gain or lose marks.

- There is a focus on developing literacy skills in all year groups and one reading class a week is provided for all junior cycle students.
- The English department undertakes an analysis of results in State examinations on an annual basis and English teachers should continue to work towards increasing the number of students taking higher or ordinary level in State examinations. In this regard, the targets in the DEIS plan in relation to literacy could be more measurable.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision of English lessons for all year groups is very good and students with additional needs receive much extra support in English.
- Students are streamed from first year. It is recommended that concurrency be provided on the timetable for the non-JCSP class groups in second year to allow for movement of students between English class groups as appropriate. Such concurrency is provided in senior cycle.
- A literacy policy is in place. The range of activities provided during literacy week to promote literacy is commended.
- There is very good provision of resources to support English. All classrooms are equipped with computers and data projectors.
- Teachers have benefited from continuing professional development in a range of areas to support quality teaching and learning.
- Currently, while all teachers in the second-level school also teach Communications, there is little rotation of teachers who are fully qualified to teach English to the highest level between Junior and Leaving Certificate classes. It is recommended that all suitably qualified teachers have the opportunity to teach all levels and year groups.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Teachers in the English department collaborate very well. There is common assessment where appropriate, sharing of resources and frequent meetings.
 - The texts chosen for study at junior and senior cycle are appropriate in terms of range and challenge. The TY and LCA English courses are well planned and suitable.
 - The subject is well coordinated and there was evidence of regular review of policies and practices at individual and department level. This is highly commended.
 - There is a broad overall plan for each year group. Individual plans are in line with these plans. The quality of planning and preparation was very good. All plans focused on developing the four key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening.
 - It is evident that much thought and work went into implementing the recommendations from the last English inspection reports.
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The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy 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 teachers of English are pleased with the report from the inspection which affirms much good practice within the English department. They are satisfied with the main findings of the report. In particular they were pleased that the sharing of ideas and resources was commented on. They were also pleased that the implementation of the recommendations from a previous inspection was referred to in this report.

On page 3 the teaching and learning was positive both at second level and at post leaving certificate level. We were particularly impressed with the comment about the positive learning environment created by the teachers. It is always our priority to allow students to fully participate in class and vary our teaching methodologies to create a positive learning environment. In the future we will continue to:

- Share resources
- Have good classroom management
- Create positive learning environments
- Maintain positive relations
- Have our aims clearly defined
- Display key words
- Assign homework
- Encourage student participation
- Continue with the reading class
- Encourage as many students as possible to follow the honours curriculum

The teachers are actively examining their questioning techniques and will take all comments about direct questioning on board. The junior certificate teachers are adapting the criteria for assessment in correcting homework and examinations. The school is conducting an evaluation of the Deis literacy targets and is devising new targets for the next three years that are SMART. This will happen during this academic year.

Subject provision will continue to be of paramount importance to the school management and teachers of English. International students and students with special needs will continue to receive the extra support they need to achieve good results. The Literacy and English policies will continue to be reviewed and updated.

Planning and preparation take place at regular intervals during the school year. The comments in this section reflect the importance which the English department place on being well organised and having plans that take into consideration the various needs of the students.

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

- At departmental level we have had meetings and analysed the Leaving Certificate and Junior Certificate results for 2012.
- At departmental level we have planned for this academic year (2012-2013) and are continuing to share plans and resources.
- The school management have timetabled the second year English classes concurrently. This will facilitate the movement of students between levels.
- Our plans are including the evaluation of our questioning techniques particularly direct questioning. The English teachers have attended inservice organised by Co Louth VEC which allowed opportunities to analyse questioning techniques.
- An excellent English for Fun Week was held after the inspection. Lots of activities were organised to encourage students to become positively involved in learning English. This is also part of our planning for this academic year.