

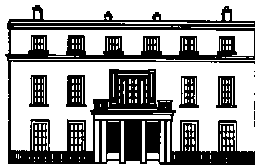
An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of English
REPORT**

**Coláiste Phádraig
Lucan, County Dublin
Roll number: 60264A**

Date of inspection: 8 April 2011



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

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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	7 and 8 April 2011
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 nine class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- Very good quality teaching and learning was observed in almost all lessons with one instance where there were significant weaknesses in the quality of teaching and learning.
- In almost all lessons, students were participative, focused and well behaved. Teachers had a good awareness of different learning styles and active learning was encouraged in many lessons.
- The key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening were appropriately developed.
- Almost all teachers share assessment criteria at junior and senior cycle with students and give very good constructive feedback to students. Students are assigned regular written work in a range of genres.
- Whole-school support and provision for English are good.
- Very high quality subject planning and close collaboration between the teachers were in evidence. The subject department is progressive and reflective and promotes English through a range of co-curricular activities.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To encourage students to take responsibility for their own work, students should be required to redraft their work and correct their errors.
- The English department should compare results in state examinations from year to year to ascertain trends in terms of uptake of levels.
- Teachers should review the practice of setting students for English from second year.
- The size of the English teaching team should be reduced with each teacher having more class groups for English.
- More opportunities for co-operative learning should be provided in the case of some teachers.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste Phádraig is an all-boys secondary school and provides the Junior Certificate and Leaving Certificate programmes, Transition Year (TY) (optional), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. The school is multi-cultural in that over forty-three nationalities are represented within the student cohort.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very good quality teaching and learning was observed in almost all lessons. The purpose of these lessons was shared with the students and, in some instances of very good practice, was reviewed at the end. There was a good focus on deep analysis of texts and on developing critical thinking skills.
- There was one instance of significant weakness in the quality of teaching and learning.
- Much thought had gone into planning all lessons and almost all lessons were well structured, although in a few lessons the pace was either too rushed or could have been quicker.
- The good practice of encouraging students' personal responses to texts is promoted from first year. In some sixth-year classes, care should be taken to ensure that students are fully aware of names of characters and places.
- The teaching of the English course is very well integrated. Links were created with previous learning which put learning in context for students.
- Questioning techniques were generally good and ensured understanding and extended thinking. Directing questions to individual students rather than seeking global responses should have been more widely used at times.
- It was evident that students were used to discussion and participation in their lessons. Active learning including co-operative learning was observed and more opportunities for this should be developed among some teachers.
- There was a good awareness among teachers of different learning styles.
- In almost all lessons, students demonstrated good interest and engagement and were very participative and well behaved. In these lessons there was a positive atmosphere and good student-teacher relationships.
- The key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening were appropriately developed.
- Information and communication technology (ICT) was very well used in many lessons and this enhanced and contextualised students' learning. Handouts and worksheets were also effectively used.
- Students' copies and folders were well maintained and showed evidence of a range of purposeful class work and homework. In some classes, student journals were not always filled in.
- A particularly good feature of English teaching was the sharing of assessment criteria at junior and senior cycle. In addition, in almost all cases, there was good constructive feedback given to students on where they should improve. Students should also be encouraged to redraft their work and correct their own errors so that they take responsibility for improving their work. In one instance there were no meaningful corrections of students' work observed.

- The English department undertakes an analysis of results in state examinations annually. They should also compare results from year to year to ascertain trends in terms of uptake of levels. Teachers encourage students to take higher level in State examinations where appropriate.
- Classrooms were stimulating learning environments.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Provision and timetabling of English lessons is good. There is an even distribution of lessons across the week with the exception of two first-year groups that have English twice on one day.
- Students are placed in mixed-ability class groups in first year. Students are then set for English in second year. It is recommended that teachers consider arranging all junior cycle class groups in a mixed-ability formation. This might have the effect of increasing the uptake of higher-level in junior cycle.
- Some teachers with base classrooms have developed class libraries and there is good promotion of reading. The English department is aiming to start a school library and this should be encouraged and supported.
- Students with English as an additional language are suitably placed according to ability in class groups. Students with special educational needs (SEN) are well supported and there is good liaison between the SEN and English departments. It is suggested that the SEN department is given an opportunity to brief staff on appropriate teaching strategies for SEN students at staff meetings.
- The English department consists of twelve teachers. Some teachers teach just one class group English. A smaller teaching team with more frequent access to the subject would be more appropriate.
- As well as having participated in whole-staff in-service in mixed ability, many teachers participate in continuing professional development courses.
- SEN and students with English as an additional language (EAL) are appropriately assessed on entry to the school and at intervals thereafter. All students sit formal examinations twice each year and results of class tests or formal examinations are communicated to home through the student journal and/or reports.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Very high quality subject planning was observed. There was evidence of excellent collaboration among teachers and frequent meetings are held. Records of meetings indicate a progressive and reflective subject department.
- The department's subject plans have all the elements of good practice including specifying learning outcomes for each year, and the plans document very good advice on appropriate and imaginative teaching methods for each aspect of the course.

- Teachers collaborate to develop common examinations for first years. It is suggested that common examinations be also set in second, third and fifth years.
 - Teachers are commended for teaching a novel in each year of junior cycle. All teachers should ensure that the novel chosen for use in the Junior Certificate examination prepares students adequately not only for the Junior Certificate examination but also for senior cycle.
 - Teachers aim to promote a love of language and literature and this is reflected in the strong promotion of English-related co-curricular activities, including drama, in the school. Student success in English is celebrated and displayed.
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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

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

Following a very positive report from the recent inspection by the Department of Education Inspectorate, our English department have looked at the main recommendation of the report.

From these recommendations work has already begun on encouraging students to take responsibility for their own work. There was general agreement from all within the department that the promotion of self correction of errors and redrafting of answers was needed.

Reviewing of results in the state examinations has already begun and very positive moves to motivate students to take English at a higher level have taken place.

The practice of setting (streaming) students for English from 2nd Year will be reviewed on a year by year basis. We have just come to the end of our first Junior Cycle of students who have experienced mixed ability and we are in the process of assessing the outcome of this decision.

Cooperative learning within the class was also seen as being very beneficial and teachers agreed to promote this teaching methodology and offer increased opportunity within their classes for this to take place.