

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Coláiste an Eachréidh
Coiléar Bán, Baile Átha an Rí, Contae na Gaillimhe
Roll number: 76102K

Date of inspection: 20 November 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	20 November 2012
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and teacher• Interaction with students	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during three class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teacher

MAIN FINDINGS

- Teaching ranged from good to very good and learning was good in the lessons evaluated.
- Very good rapport exists between teacher and students.
- While students are producing good volumes of written work and formative feedback is being provided on substantial pieces of work, there is scope for supporting even higher quality achievement in this area.
- There are very strong whole-school supports for the subject.
- There is scope for the department to further promote students' personal reading.
- High-quality teacher preparation was observed in all lessons and detailed schemes of work have been prepared for all year groups.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- The explicit building up of word banks with students and more sustained development of students' process approach to writing is needed.
- Further development of the department's assessment for learning strategies is recommended to support even higher student literacy achievement.
- Additional strategies for promoting personal reading should be incorporated into the schemes of work.

INTRODUCTION

Coláiste an Eachréidh is under the patronage of County Galway Vocational Education Committee (VEC). Founded in 2006, the school is a co-educational, all-Irish post-primary college, with an enrolment of 127 students. The school offers the following programmes: the Junior Certificate (JC), a compulsory Transition Year (TY), and established Leaving Certificate (LC).

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Very good, affirming rapport exists between teacher and students.
- Teaching ranged from good to very good in the lessons evaluated. Very good practices observed included teaching students' clear routines for colour coding stylistic features of poems, for maintaining their notes on particular sections of the course, and for undertaking strategic examination preparation. Also, there was a strong emphasis on requiring students to identify evidence to support their opinions on texts.
- Learning was good in the lessons evaluated. Practices that supported learning included the playing of audio recordings of texts, the displaying of visual images using information and communication technology (ICT) to aid understanding, and the highlighting of thematic links between studied texts written in different genres.
- Students' writing skills are supported by the use of a keyword approach to introduce and reinforce new terms, by the running of class competitions to encourage creativity, and by the use of exemplars of standard with fifth year students. Also, it is commended that TY students use ICT and a process approach to writing to produce a fortnightly newsletter on school activities. Building on this foundation, it is recommended that word banks be explicitly built up with students to support composition work. Also, the development of a process approach to writing with all class groups is recommended. To this end, the department should engage in explicit modelling for students of drafting, editing and rewriting skills using ICT. In turn, students should also be required to draft and redraft substantial compositions from time to time.
- The base room for English is a motivational learning space, where students' work is displayed, along with teaching aids to support students' understanding of particular components of the Junior Certificate course.
- Homework is consistently set, monitored and formative feedback is provided on substantial pieces of work. The department is now advised to adopt three additional assessment for learning (AfL) approaches. The first is the use of actual errors arising in samples of student work to deliver contextualised instruction in the mechanics of language. The second is the use of criteria for assessment with junior as well as with senior cycle students in marking and in giving feedback on substantial pieces of writing. The third is the occasional use of exemplars of standard with all class groups, to support both peer and self assessment.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- The whole-school supports for English are very strong. They include very good timetable provision in junior and senior cycle, mixed-ability class formation, teacher-based classrooms, a book rental scheme for junior cycle students, ICT resources for teaching and netbooks for all students. The planned activation of a whole-school online platform package, where class materials can be uploaded for students to access remotely, will be a further support to teaching and learning.
- In anticipation of a significant increase in student numbers next year, school management plans to employ a second teacher of English. This is commended, as it will spread the work of subject department planning and the correction of student work among two colleagues.
- Activities organised within the school foster students' skills and interests in English. These include trips to theatrical productions, the organisation of a workshop with a visiting writer, and encouragement of students entering public speaking and writing competitions.
- Students' interest in personal reading is promoted by the requirement that first years produce book reviews and by the inclusion of some silent reading classes in the first-year programme. In addition, it is advised that recommended reading lists for different age groups and genders be prepared and provided to students and parents. Consideration should also be given to awarding a percentage of marks toward end-of-term assessments for book review assignments and or for students' reviews of articles on current affairs topics.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- High quality teacher preparation was observed in all lessons and detailed schemes of work have been prepared for all year groups. It is commended that specific planning for the needs of students preparing for both higher and ordinary levels in the same class group has been engaged in at both junior and senior cycle.
- Transition Year began in the school in 2011. It is encouraged that, over time, learning in TY English be connected with established literary events in Galway such as the Cúirt festival, to extend students' familiarity with the work of living writers.
- It is commended that formal self-evaluation has begun in planning for English. Building on this, it is recommended that formal action planning also be established as a departmental planning practice.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal and subject teacher 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.

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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 school is satisfied with 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 recommendations made have been incorporated as a central part of school planning and as an aspect of school self-evaluation.

The above is a translation of the school response submitted by the board of management