

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

**Subject Inspection of English
REPORT**

**Presentation Secondary School
Loughboy, Kilkenny
Roll number: 61590S**

Date of inspection: 26 November 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

INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	25 and 26 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 ten class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The English teachers in the school are hardworking and committed.
- Teachers are very good role models for their subject and have very good communication skills in almost all cases.
- A range of effective teaching methods leading to in-depth learning was utilised by most teachers.
- Students receive frequent and appropriate written work which is well corrected.
- There is good team work and collaboration among the English teachers.
- Teachers have fully implemented the recommendations of the last English inspection report in 2006.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should avail of every opportunity to develop independent learning skills and active learning among students.
 - The English subject plan should be developed to include key learning outcomes and appropriate methodologies for each aspect of the course.
 - Teachers should ensure that students do not have to study new texts if changing class groups.
 - The course content for junior cycle should be expanded and Leaving Certificate ordinary-level students must study three comparative texts.
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INTRODUCTION

Presentation Secondary School Loughboy is an all girls' Catholic Voluntary Secondary school with an enrolment of 666 students. The school offers the Junior and Leaving Certificate as well as an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- The quality of teaching was very good in most lessons and this gave rise to in-depth student learning. In most lessons teachers' enthusiasm for the subject was passed on to their students and students' critical thinking skills were well developed. In a few lessons there was a need for development of students' critical thinking skills.
- The learning intention of lessons was clear which ensured that the lessons had a good structure. In most lessons the learning outcomes were revisited to ensure student understanding. Good links were created with previous learning.
- Classroom management was good in all lessons. Teachers had established good routines and had a very nice relationship with their students. Students in turn appeared to be engaged in their lessons and, when given the opportunity, they participated well.
- In many lessons, teachers ensured student involvement throughout. This was affected through frequent questioning, quizzes, pair work, discussion, and role play. Class work was generally more participative, enjoyable and dynamic in these cases. It is recommended that teachers utilise every available opportunity to provide students with independent learning opportunities.
- In the cases of best practice, the key skills of reading, writing, speaking and listening were explicitly taught, students were led to empathise with studied characters and there was also a focus on literacy development. The lesson content was made very accessible for students through thoughtful preparation, good explanations and questioning, appropriate classroom tasks and deep reading of texts.
- Students were too passive in a few lessons. In these lessons the teacher's voice tended to dominate, there was little checking of students' understanding and little encouragement of student participation. It is recommended that rather than telling students meanings, teachers should elicit responses from students and they should take every opportunity to check individual student understanding and encourage discussion.
- Questioning was best when students were named to respond to questions rather than the teacher asking for hands up.
- There was much evidence that students had good knowledge of their texts. Teaching strategies were imaginative and competent. Almost all teachers were very good role models for the subject.
- There was judicious use of information and communication technology (ICT) to enhance learning.
- Some very good literacy strategies were in use in lessons including a focus on key words, very good dictionary work, use of classroom displays, and the explicit teaching of comprehension skills.
- Students are assigned longer pieces of work on a regular basis. It is commendable that in some lessons students are explicitly taught the writing process. In addition, teachers integrate the teaching of language and literature.

- Assessment for learning practice was very good. Students benefit from regular correction of their work and receive good feedback on areas where they need to improve. They are also encouraged to reflect on what they in turn must do to improve their work.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT.

- Provision of English lessons is good for almost all year groups and timetabling arrangements are appropriate.
- Students are appropriately placed in mixed-ability class groups in first year and are banded or set thereafter. Concurrency on the timetable facilitates students who may change level.
- There is good whole school support for English. A budget is available for the subject. The library has been recently revamped and is a pleasant space for students to read.
- Good ICT facilities are available.
- English teachers are commended for their participation in a range of continuing professional development events. They are also commended for their organisation of a range of co-curricular events pertaining to English.
- Good whole school assessment policies and practices are in place. Common testing is used where appropriate in English.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- There was evidence of very good team work in the English department. Minutes of meetings indicate good discussion on a range of issues pertaining to English including teaching methods.
- There is a common programme of work outlined for each year group which is written in terms of topics/content and assessment. Learning outcomes are included as an appendix to the English subject plan. It is recommended that teachers identify the key skills to be taught for each aspect of the course and include these as well as possible teaching strategies in the plan.
- Some students who move classes during the year may have to study some different literary texts. Therefore, it is recommended that teachers ensure some crossover of texts between class groups to ensure that no student has to study a new text if moving class. Alternatively, students should remain in the same class group even when changing level.
- The LCA English and Communications programme is highly commended for its breadth.
- While it is commendable that first-year students formally study a novel in class, the junior cycle programme of study could be expanded, particularly in third year. It is also recommended that all teachers ensure that the junior cycle course is suitably challenging for all students. Leaving Certificate students, even those choosing ordinary level, must study three comparative texts. The TY programme of work should be shared with students or the students could be consulted about their programme.
- Certificate examination results in English indicate very high uptake of higher level and very good success by students. The analysis of results should be used as one tool in the self-evaluation process. A further tool that might be considered is peer observation, given the very good practice among English teachers that could be shared to the benefit of all.
- Almost all the recommendations made during the last subject inspection of English in 2006 have been fully implemented.

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 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.