

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**

**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection of English  
REPORT**

**Coláiste Chríost Rí  
Capwell Road, Cork  
Roll number: 625600**

**Date of inspection: 8 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**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	7 & 8 November 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 seven class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The standard of teaching and learning was good, with examples of very good practice.
- A very good relationship was evident between teachers and students.
- A wide range of resources was used to support teaching and learning.
- A number of whole-school initiatives in the area of literacy are underway.
- English teacher base rooms incorporated an attractive print-rich environment.
- A Transition Year (TY) programme has been developed which operates on a modular basis.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- As a means of building on current good practice, the department should investigate and implement co-operative learning strategies that will support oral language development.
  - The school should move towards the provision of five English lessons per week in junior cycle.
  - The number of formal English subject department meetings should be increased.
  - Common schemes of work should be developed on an incremental basis.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Coláiste Chríost Rí is an all-boys voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 633 students. The school offers the Junior Certificate programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and the Leaving Certificate (Established) programme. In addition, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme is offered to students.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- The standard of teaching and learning was good with examples of very good practice. Lessons were universally well-structured and were paced appropriately. A very good relationship was evident between teachers and students. Classroom management was of a very high standard.
- A wide range of resources was used to support teaching and learning. Information and communication technology (ICT) was utilised to good effect. The English department is encouraged to continue to investigate the possibilities afforded by ICT in supporting its practice. Further areas to be considered might include the use of visualisers to support assessment-for-learning strategies and the adoption of virtual-learning platforms.
- Pair work and group work were frequently observed. This was very worthwhile, particularly as a means of developing students' oral language. In addition, it served as a bridge for students in junior cycle from their experiences in primary school. In this context, it is recommended that, as a development on current practice, the department should focus on the further development of co-operative learning strategies that will support oral language development in junior cycle.
- Reading activities often featured in lessons. The use of pre-reading activities and links to students' previous experiences was frequently observed and these were used, alongside a variety of other approaches, to support students' reading development. An important area for the subject department to consider, particularly in the context of junior cycle classes, is the explicit teaching of comprehension strategies as a link to students' primary school experiences and as a support for their reading skills.
- Homework was regularly assigned and monitored in classes observed. There was evidence of the adoption of an integrated approach to the language and literature elements of the syllabuses in a number of cases. The incorporation of this approach in departmental and individual plans is strongly encouraged. Very good practice in the use of formative assessment was also noted in classes that formed part of the evaluation. An increased focus on the use of self-assessment and peer-assessment could also be of use, particularly with regard to work on students' writing skills. This might include, for example, the setting of clear success criteria for writing tasks, alongside the use of student proofing sheets.
- The work undertaken by the English department in creating teacher base rooms with an attractive learning environment is very worthwhile. In addition, classroom libraries have been developed. All of this is very positive. As a further extension of this good work, it is suggested that the display of student writing could be pursued, with the writing process as the focus for such work.

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

- Classes in junior cycle are currently organised using a banding system. The school plans to move to a mixed-ability system in first year next year. This move is very worthwhile.

The school encourages as many students as possible to participate in the higher-level English course in junior and in senior cycle. Currently students are assigned to higher and ordinary level classes in October of second year, although they are facilitated in moving from these different levels, where appropriate. The current system is kept under ongoing review within the English department. It is important that interrogation of current arrangements should continue, particularly in the context of the early stage of students' affective and cognitive development at which this decision is being made.

- In junior cycle, classes in first year, second year and third year are provided with four English lessons per week. It is recommended that the school should move towards the provision of five English lessons per week in junior cycle, 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.
- Very good whole-school literacy initiatives are underway. The English department has been involved in fruitful discussions in this area with the school's literacy link teacher. Alongside the development of class libraries, the involvement of the school in a variety of internal and external reading initiatives is very worthwhile. The planned renovation of the school library is strongly encouraged.

#### **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- There is one formal English department meeting each year. Minutes of these meetings are maintained and it is positive to note that the focus of these meetings has been on teaching and learning. In this context, it is recommended that the school should move towards increasing the number of formal subject department meetings organised each year. This would serve to support the subject department in discussing, practising and reviewing the use of particular methodologies in the short and medium term, while also acting as a support for the overall subject-planning process.
- A subject plan has been developed. It is suggested that a list of the novels and plays being studied in each year group should be added to this plan. In addition, it is recommended that common schemes of work should be developed on an incremental basis. These plans should allow for appropriate flexibility for teachers in addressing the learning outcomes for students in the context of their class groups. With this in mind, the plans should be based on clear learning outcomes and should be time-linked. It is also recommended that the subject plan should include a clear reference to the study of three comparative texts in the ordinary level Leaving Certificate course as policy and practice in the department.
- There is good communication between the English department and the special educational needs team. An appropriate range of assessment procedures are undertaken to support the identification of students in need of additional support on entry to the school. The possibilities afforded through the use of team-teaching to support inclusion and the literacy needs of students could usefully be considered in the future.

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

*Published February 2014*