

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Subject Inspection of English
REPORT

Rosses Community School
Dungloe, County Donegal
Roll number: 91407T

Date of inspection: 15 May 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

Dates of inspection	14 and 15 May 2012
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 seven class periods• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and teachers

MAIN FINDINGS

- The quality of teaching and learning was good overall in lessons observed.
- Students are encouraged to achieve and assessment practice is good.
- Attainment trends are good but there is scope for improvement in the uptake of higher-level English in the junior cycle.
- Whole-school support for the subject is good in a number of areas.
- The school and staff have engaged very positively with continuing professional development (CPD).
- Planning for English is good.

MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS

- To build on existing good practice, and to assist the school in implementing targets for improvement in line with the Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS) action plan, the department should focus on increasing uptake of higher-level English in the junior cycle.
 - The plan for all English programmes should document specific learning outcomes for speaking and listening; texts should be reviewed.
 - The Transition Year (TY) programme should be reviewed to promote cross-curricular and experiential learning and to introduce students to innovative ways of engaging with language as makers and consumers of texts.
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INTRODUCTION

Rosses Community School has an enrolment of 498 students, 264 females and 234 males. It provides the Junior Certificate programme, the Junior Certificate School Programme (JCSP), an optional TY, the established Leaving Certificate, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP) and the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA) programme. It participates in the DEIS action plan.

TEACHING AND LEARNING

- Lessons were thoroughly prepared in all cases. Learning outcomes were shared with students at the start of almost all lessons and this is commended. In some instances, these may need to be refined in order to make them more specific and achievable. Planned learning outcomes should be reviewed at the end of lessons to assess impact on learning.
- Routines were observed and in almost all lessons, students were well prepared for class. Methods and resources ensured a good level of student engagement and enthusiasm in most lessons. In a small number of cases, lesson content did not engage students or was inappropriate for the class group, resources used were unimaginative and there was too great a dependency on text alone. Lesson planning and content need to be reviewed in such cases.
- It is positive that group work was used as a strategy to promote collaborative learning. Innovative use was made of information and communication technology (ICT) to promote learning in a lesson observed.
- Questioning strategy varied in its effectiveness. In the best examples, a variety of techniques was used and there was appropriate emphasis on the development of higher-order thinking skills. Commendably, in some cases, students were encouraged to think and reflect before answering.
- Vocabulary development was a focus through the pre-teaching of keywords and this is commended. Techniques such as “point-quote-explain” PQE, and the use of graphic organisers helped students to order, categorise and then analyse information. It is commendable that dictionaries were used in a lesson observed. In general, there could be more emphasis both on the integration of language and literature and on differentiation in content, tasks set, methods and assessment.
- Reading is encouraged in a number of ways. Many classrooms have a reading corner. JCSP resources are used well. There is a very positive emphasis on creative writing. The work of students has been affirmed through internal publications. To build on good work being done in the areas of reading and writing, there should now be an explicit focus on skills development in the areas of speaking and listening to promote oracy in all cases.
- Homework is regularly assigned. Students’ copybooks indicate that many write in a variety of genres and good work was noted, for example, in first-year copybooks.
- Assessment practice was good. Learning was monitored in all lessons observed. Good developmental feedback in copybooks directed students. In weaker classes, assessment for learning strategies such as “traffic lights” should be considered to encourage self-assessment and to help teachers evaluate the success of teaching strategies.
- Students are encouraged to achieve and are supported in their learning.
- Attainment is good overall.

SUBJECT PROVISION AND WHOLE SCHOOL SUPPORT

- Timetabling for the subject is good in the junior cycle and in the Leaving Certificate programme with five lessons per week. Three periods are allocated in TY and this provision is complemented by modules in cognate areas. Three are allocated in LCA years one and two. Ideally, four periods are desirable to develop literacy and communication skills. There is scope for improvement in the distribution of lessons to promote continuity of learning.
- With the exception of one higher-level class, most first-year students are organised in mixed-ability groupings as is the TY group. Students are set in higher-level and ordinary-level classes in second and third year and in the Leaving Certificate programme. Uptake of higher-level English is slightly below national norms in the junior cycle. While taking the special educational needs of students into account, the school should consider mixed-ability grouping throughout the junior cycle as one strategy to improve uptake. Uptake of higher-level English is, on average, above national norms in the senior cycle. The department should examine reasons for the success in the senior cycle to see if lessons can be learned and applied in the junior cycle.
- Currently, students with special educational needs receive a high level of support in small, designated JCSP classes. The school promotes literacy through the establishment of reading corners in classrooms. In addition, there is a small and welcoming JCSP reading room.
- The subject is well resourced and available facilities include a fully functioning recording studio.
- The teaching team is appropriately qualified and deployed. New staff members are supported. The teaching team is deeply committed to the subject. English teachers have engaged very positively with subject-specific CPD. A rich and varied programme of whole-staff CPD events has also been provided and this is highly commended.
- The department should explore how best to assess oral communications skills and how to recognise these in formal reporting of students' progress to parents.
- Co-curricular and extracurricular provision is good.

PLANNING AND PREPARATION

- Subject department planning is facilitated, formal structures are in place and the role of subject coordinator is rotated. There are regular subject department meetings and records are kept. Planning is informed by a very good level of collaboration and reflection. It is particularly commendable that the department has engaged in review and action planning
- To build on existing good practice and very positive trends in attainment, the department should plan for improvement in line with the school's DEIS plan.
- Content of the TY programme for English indicates strong influence from the Leaving Certificate programme. Given that stimulating modules, for example, in communications overlap with English, opportunities for cross-curricular links should be fully exploited. The TY programme should be reviewed to reflect the spirit of the programme and to introduce students to innovative ways of engaging with language as makers and consumers of texts.

- Texts needs to be reviewed in the junior cycle and in the LCA programme to ensure they are appropriate and sufficiently numerous and varied to meet the full requirements of the syllabuses.

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; a response was not received from the board.