

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Subject Inspection in English**

**REPORT**

<b>Ainm na scoile / School name</b>	St Aloysius School
<b>Seoladh na scoile / School address</b>	St Marie's Of The Isle Sharman Crawford Street Cork
<b>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</b>	62630J

**Date of Inspection: 17-04-2018**



---

An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **SUBJECT INSPECTION**

Subject Inspections report on the quality of work in individual curriculum areas within a school. They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject in the school.

### **HOW TO READ THIS REPORT**

During this inspection, the inspector evaluated learning and teaching in English under the following headings:

1. Teaching, learning and assessment
2. Subject provision and whole-school support
3. Planning and preparation

Inspectors describe the quality of each of these areas using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown on the final page of this report. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the quality of the school's provision in each area.

## **CHILD PROTECTION**

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

## SUBJECT INSPECTION

### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	16 and 17 April 2018
<b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Discussion with principal and key staff</li><li>• Interaction with students</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

### School context

St Aloysius Secondary School is an all-girls voluntary secondary school with a current enrolment of 313 students. The school offers the Junior Cycle, an optional Transition Year (TY) programme, the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). The school operates under the trusteeship of Catholic Education, an Irish Schools Trust (CEIST).

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### Findings

- Overall, there was a very good standard of teaching, learning and assessment.
- Information and communications technology (ICT) was used to good effect, although some opportunities for further development exist in this area.
- There was evidence of regular and effective engagement with extended writing activities and these could be further added to through consideration of the place of the student's collection of texts in Junior Cycle.
- Very good provision and support for the subject is in place at whole-school level.
- The English department has participated in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and this should support further development of the subject plan.
- Overall, the standard of planning and preparation was very good, while some areas for further development were noted.

#### Recommendations

- The English department should incorporate the visualiser as a useful additional tool to support the explicit teaching of writing and assessment.
- Expectations with regard to the collection of the student's texts in Junior Cycle should be discussed and set down in a new assessment section of the department plan.
- A new developmental section of the department plan should be created.
- A review and adjustment of the current Junior Cycle schemes of work should be undertaken.

## DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

### 1. TEACHING, LEARNING, AND ASSESSMENT

- Overall, a very good standard of teaching, learning and assessment was observed during the evaluation. Clarity with regard to the learning underway was achieved in all lessons, frequently through the effective deployment of learning intentions. Occasionally, further consideration might be given to highlighting the learning of particular skills when teachers are framing learning intentions. Good relationships between teachers and students were evident in all lessons.
- There was effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) in lessons observed. In this context, it is recommended that the English department should incorporate the visualiser as a useful additional tool to support the explicit teaching of writing and assessment in English. The school should support access to visualisers in English base classrooms as much as is practicable, within the limits of available resources.
- Examples of the organisation of exploratory talk through group activities were observed in almost all lessons, and these worked well. On occasion, the use of co-operative learning approaches to support semi-independent work on the part of students in examining previously studied material could have added a further sense of ownership to already good student learning. Overall, there was a very good balance between teacher and student talk.
- There was evidence of regular engagement with extended writing activities in English lessons and various writing activities were undertaken. In addition, some very good examples of the student's collection of texts were observed. In this context, it is recommended that the English department should now discuss expectations with regard to the collection of the student's texts in Junior Cycle and set these down in the English department plan. This would serve to consolidate and further develop existing practice. Key items which should be addressed include: the incorporation of a collection of texts, encompassing the writing process approach, as part of students' experience in first year; highlighting the writing collection as the home for regular encounters with extended writing during the school year; and the use of different forms of assessment feedback to support student learning and assessment manageability, and to enhance students' assessment capability. Overall, this work with regard to the collection of the student's texts could form part of an assessment section in the English subject plan.
- Reading and viewing activities featured prominently in lessons. In particular, the facilitation of active viewing during lessons was worthwhile. In addition, there were good expectations with regard to students' use of vocabulary, including the use of a dictionary and thesaurus in class. Close reading of texts was undertaken in a number of lessons, to good effect. Where this was most powerful, an emphasis on the need to consider the impact of particular language techniques, as well as their identification, was emphasised. The English department has previously explored links with students' primary schools regarding novels encountered in sixth class. This is very positive and it is suggested that these links might be further explored with regard to the areas of comprehension, writing process, and vocabulary to further facilitate students' transition from primary school to post-primary experiences of English.
- Very strong practice in the provision of teachers' comment-based formative assessment was observed. This included examples of excellent practice. It should be noted that participation in Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings will provide a further very significant professional development opportunity for teachers' collective practice in this area.

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

- There is very good subject provision and whole school support for English. The school timetable provides a very good allocation for English lessons in all year groups. English teachers are deployed between levels and cycles on a rotational basis, as is good practice. In addition, the very high level of student participation in the higher level examinations suggests that communication of high expectations to students constitutes a key element of the English department and school culture.
- The English department has engaged with continuing professional development through the Junior Cycle for Teachers (JCT) support service. In addition, the department has organised a very worthwhile range of extracurricular and co-curricular activities linked to English.
- Reporting to parents on student achievement through the use of new Junior Cycle descriptors has begun and this has included explanations of the relevant new terms. Some discussions with regard to anticipated adjustments to traditional modes and timings of assessment in second year and third year have taken place. These should be advanced, along with consideration of where new Junior Cycle modes of assessment reside in reporting arrangements from first year.
- The school has engaged with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. Members of the English department have taken a very active role in the initial literacy phase of the SSE process, including a strong and continuing commitment to the development of the school library. It is anticipated that the area of formative assessment will continue to be explored through the SSE process in the near future. In this context, it is recommended that the engagement of the English department with the SSE process and other areas for development in the subject should be reflected in a new, developmental, section of the department plan.

## **3. PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- Overall, the standard of planning and preparation was very good. All teachers' individual planning was of a very good standard. A very diligent approach to teachers' collective planning for Junior Cycle was also in evidence. Subject department meetings are held regularly and subject co-ordinators are in place.
- Following the completion of the first cycle of the implementation of the Junior Cycle English specification, now is an opportune time to review the current Junior Cycle schemes of work. It is recommended that this should be undertaken with a focus on the following areas: the further development of thematic units in all years of Junior Cycle; the refinement and auditing of the learning outcomes associated with each unit so that the department clearly defines the learning to be achieved at the end of each unit; and the linking of specific summative assessment tasks to key learning in each unit.
- A very detailed Transition Year (TY) plan has been developed and imaginative approaches to the implementation of TY were noted during the evaluation. It is suggested that, as the TY plan continues to develop, the incorporation of a collection of texts on the part of students as an additional assessment mode might be considered, as a means of building on students' experiences of Junior Cycle up to that point.

The board of management 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.

## THE INSPECTORATE'S QUALITY CONTINUUM

Inspectors describe the quality of provision in the school using the Inspectorate's quality continuum which is shown below. The quality continuum provides examples of the language used by inspectors when evaluating and describing the of quality the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
<b>Very Good</b>	<b>Very good</b> applies where the quality of the areas evaluated is of a very high standard. The very few areas for improvement that exist do not significantly impact on the overall quality of provision. For some schools in this category the quality of what is evaluated is <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful; few areas for improvement; notable; of a very high standard. Excellent; outstanding; exceptionally high standard, with very significant strengths; exemplary
<b>Good</b>	<b>Good</b> applies where the strengths in the areas evaluated clearly outweigh the areas in need of improvement. The areas requiring improvement impact on the quality of pupils' learning. The school needs to build on its strengths and take action to address the areas identified as requiring improvement in order to achieve a <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
<b>Satisfactory</b>	<b>Satisfactory</b> applies where the quality of provision is adequate. The strengths in what is being evaluated just outweigh the shortcomings. While the shortcomings do not have a significant negative impact they constrain the quality of the learning experiences and should be addressed in order to achieve a better standard.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
<b>Fair</b>	<b>Fair</b> applies where, although there are some strengths in the areas evaluated, deficiencies or shortcomings that outweigh those strengths also exist. The school will have to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is satisfactory or better.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
<b>Weak</b>	<b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated whole-school action is required to address the areas of concern. In some cases, the intervention of other agencies may be required to support improvements.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

**Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report**

The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge the contents of the report. The English department has studied the report and welcomes the affirmation of good practice in the teaching of English in St. Aloysius' Secondary School. It will use the report's findings to inform future subject department practice.

**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 Board of Management has noted the recommendations in the report. The process of implementing the findings has begun as part of the school's ongoing process of self-evaluation.