

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

**Subject Inspection of ENGLISH  
REPORT**

**Mountmellick Community School**  
**Mountmellick, County Laois**  
**Roll number: 91426A**

**Date of inspection: 6 May 2015**



**AN ROINN | DEPARTMENT OF**  
**OIDEACHAIS | EDUCATION**  
**AGUS SCILEANNA | AND SKILLS**

**REPORT  
ON  
THE QUALITY OF LEARNING AND TEACHING IN ENGLISH**

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**INFORMATION ON THE INSPECTION**

<b>Dates of inspection</b>	5 and 6 May 2015
<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 eight class periods</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul>

**MAIN FINDINGS**

- The teaching observed was good or very good, and a number of lessons were of very high quality.
- Lessons were well structured to provide opportunities for students to engage in purposeful work.
- Good attention was paid to the development of students' language skills, and suggestions made to teachers for extending the approaches used were welcomed.
- Students worked co-operatively in a well-managed and supportive environment.
- Structures to support effective subject department planning are in place; some areas of subject planning require further development.

**MAIN RECOMMENDATIONS**

- To build on the good practice observed, further work on approaches to the reading of poetry and the structured development of students' writing skills is recommended.
  - Subject planning for the junior cycle years should be based more closely on the learning outcomes identified in the subject specification.
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## **INTRODUCTION**

Mountmellick Community School is a co-educational school established in 1990 following the amalgamation of the town's secondary and vocational schools. It offers the Junior Certificate, the Leaving Certificate, and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme, and will introduce an optional Transition Year (TY) programme in September 2015. The enrolment figure for 2014/15 is 397.

## **TEACHING AND LEARNING**

- Eight lessons were observed during the evaluation, covering all years, levels and programmes, and involving all members of the English department. Overall, the teaching observed was good or very good, and a number of lessons were of very high quality. Where areas for further development were identified, teachers noted them attentively, and were very open to suggestions for building on existing good practice.
- Within the variety of teaching approaches taken, all lessons included learning activities and tasks which were generally well planned and purposeful. At their most effective, these led to notably high levels of student engagement and learning. Approaches that would enhance students' engagement in close and careful reading of poetry could be further developed.
- Teachers consistently demonstrated an interest in language and in the texts selected. They focused on extending students' vocabulary through explicit teaching of new words, and through modelling their use and encouraging students to use them in spoken and written responses.
- Teachers related issues arising in texts to the students' own experience. This approach was effective in developing and deepening students' interest and understanding. It also allowed for differentiation and supported the learning of students experiencing difficulty.
- Good preparatory work for writing tasks featured in a number of lessons. It would be worthwhile for the English department to work collaboratively on effective approaches to the development of students' writing skills in a structured way, through the use of writing frames and creative modelling.
- The development of students' reading skills is a priority in the subject plan and was given careful attention in many lessons. Questioning was used purposefully to check students' understanding and ability to retrieve information, and well-planned tasks assisted students to develop higher-order skills of reading inferentially and forming judgements.
- Resources used in lessons were generally well prepared and appropriate. Attention was paid to the development of students' skills in reading visual texts. This area would be further supported by greater use of the data projector to display images clearly.
- Students worked co-operatively with their teachers and with each other. Their willingness to do so provides a very good foundation on which to build and strengthen their sense of responsibility for their own learning.
- Classroom management was uniformly good.
- Student copybooks and folders contained a wide variety and good volume of assignments. The oral and written feedback provided to students gave good direction for improvement and communicated high expectations.

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

- Timetable provision for English is optimal.
- Students are taught in their mixed-ability base class groups throughout the junior cycle; higher and ordinary level class groups are formed in the senior cycle. Good arrangements are in place for deciding on examination levels and facilitating change of levels where indicated.
- The re-introduction of a TY programme in the 2015/16 school year is a welcome development.
- Most members of the English department have their own base classrooms, well provided with information and communication technology. Use of the school library is currently limited; it is advisable that the school apply to have the necessary remedial work carried out to enable its full use as a resource to support reading and independent study.
- All members of the English department are subject specialists, have availed of relevant continuing professional development, and are committed to maintaining and enhancing their skills.

## **PLANNING AND PREPARATION**

- The English department is active and collaborative. It meets regularly, and records topics discussed and decisions made. The role of co-ordinator is rotated.
- The English department has developed schemes of work for each year which facilitate a common approach to subject delivery and assessment. Texts are clearly selected with a view to engaging students and providing appropriate levels of challenge.
- Year plans for the junior cycle years should refer more directly to the new English subject specification, and especially the learning outcomes it identifies.
- Good collaborative work to develop a TY programme in English is underway. The possibilities it offers for extending and deepening students' experience of English were discussed during the evaluation. The English department is encouraged to focus first on the skills and knowledge students should develop during the year, and then to select suitable materials and approaches. A content-driven programme plan is to be avoided.

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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 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.

*Published November 2015*

# **Appendix**

**SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT**

**Submitted by the Board of Management**

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

We welcome the findings of the report, particularly the reference to “High Quality” lessons, which take place in our school in a “well managed and supportive environment”.

**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 of the report will receive due consideration as part of our planning process.