



An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Subject Inspection: English Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Sandford Park School DAC
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Sandford Road Ranelagh Dublin 6
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60640C
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	19-01-2023

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	19-01-2023
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal, deputy principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 7 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Sandford Park School is a fee-charging, non-denominational school and is co-educational since 2013. Sandford Park School Ltd operates under the trusteeship of Sandford Park Holdings Trust CLG. It has an enrolment of 176 girls and 259 boys. The Junior Cycle, Leaving Certificate and a compulsory Transition Year programme are provided for students.

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.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was either very good or good. There were instances of excellent practices in some lessons.
- Teachers' enthusiasm for their subject was evident in all lessons and lessons were characterised by very good teacher-student relationships and exemplary student motivation.
- While there was some evidence of reactive differentiation practices, there was scope to develop planned differentiated tasks and activities.
- Whole- school strategies were well embedded in lessons observed, particularly in the area of assessment for learning.
- A subject plan has been diligently prepared by a collaborative and collegial English team.

Recommendations

- To further improve the learner experience and progress of students, a more productive balance between teacher input and active student participation should be developed.
- The English teachers should prioritise the planned development of differentiated teaching activities and assessment tasks that offer students appropriate levels of challenge and support.
- An assessment policy, that outlines a consistent approach to formative feedback to students, specifically regarding extended writing tasks should be developed at subject team level.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in the lessons observed was either very good or good. There were examples of exemplary practice where students were facilitated to respond personally to texts. The best lessons ensured that there was a balance between teacher exposition and purposeful student participation, particularly regarding the development of the student voice.
- Very good teacher-student rapport characterised all lessons and positively supported respectful interactions. Students were motivated and interested in achieving, which encouraged an atmosphere conducive to learning.
- In all lessons observed, teachers' own enthusiasm for the subject of English had a positive impact on student engagement.
- Some teachers had used their classrooms to develop interesting learning spaces that encouraged student collaboration, promoted vocabulary development and celebrated student achievements. Extending these worthwhile practices to all classrooms would further support student engagement and enjoyment of the subject.
- Many teachers saw the value of making connections between students' own experiences and themes or issues in the texts being studied. In the best lessons, teachers facilitated ample time for students to consider and discuss these connections and share their learning with each other.
- Clarity with regard to the learning underway in lessons was evident in most lessons, supported by the sharing of learning intentions and the signposting of success criteria with students. In one lesson, the teacher used student-friendly language to describe the learning intentions, linked them to learning that the students had already done and took time to review them so that students' learning was consolidated. In another lesson, the teacher facilitated the co-construction of success criteria with learners.
- Teacher and student voice was well balanced in a number of lessons, but there was a general tendency for teacher talk to dominate. Teachers should be mindful that oral skills development, in both junior and senior cycle, requires opportunities for students to talk and listen to each other in a purposeful manner.
- English teachers should explore ways to facilitate students to contribute their opinions, to articulate their personal opinions and to engage in exploratory classroom discussion. This will enable students to sort out their thoughts and ideas regarding texts, hear how they sound, receive feedback and arrange these pieces of information and ideas into different formats.
- Students were given opportunities to collaborate in all lessons observed and in the focus-group meeting, students extolled the benefits of learning together. To further develop collaborative learning practices, teachers are encouraged to implement a co-operative approach to group-work with ample time allocated for student feedback, and to facilitate valuable opportunities for active student participation in the task. This could be achieved by facilitating students to draw on their own experiences, interests and prior knowledge.
- During the evaluation, teachers' differentiation practices were intuitive and focused on individual help given during lessons and, in a few lessons, to differentiated questioning. In a few lessons, teachers made very good use of colourful images to support students' engagement and understanding of texts. There is scope to further develop differentiated strategies to challenge the better-able students while providing appropriate levels of support for others. Planning for differentiated strategies and activities will be particularly useful to students whose first language is not English.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- There is good whole-school support and provision for English, all teachers are classroom based and have good access to digital technology to support teaching and learning. The school utilises the school self-evaluation process as a means of improving classroom practices.
- Students' experience of English is enhanced and developed through a number of whole-school and extra-curricular initiatives that are supported by English teachers, including reading initiatives, debating, poetry clubs and the school musical. A book club has been set up to encourage reading for pleasure, a very worthwhile initiative.

3. Planning and preparation

- There were a number of strengths in collective planning and preparation, such as common schemes for all year groups, shared resources and ongoing informal and formal meetings. Whole-team formal meetings should prioritise discussions regarding improving teaching, learning and assessment in English lessons. A developmental section of the subject plan should outline the departments' planning for future improvement.
- Current subject plans and year plans were in place, and their layout in tabular format was clear and helpful. The department should aim to further develop the links between outcomes, assessment, and teaching and learning activities.
- The subject team should develop an assessment policy for English, which includes a shared approach to the provision of formative feedback on students' work. This policy could also include a common strategy for the storage and presentation of students' work.

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 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 quality of the school's provision of each area.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	<i>Very good</i> 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 <i>outstanding</i> 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
Good	<i>Good</i> 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
Satisfactory	<i>Satisfactory</i> 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
Fair	<i>Fair</i> 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
Weak	<i>Weak</i> 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;