



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Subject Inspection: English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Pauls College
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Sybil Hill Raheny Dublin
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	60290B
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	02/12/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	03/02/2026

What is a 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(s) 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.

Included in this subject inspection report is a student-friendly page that provides information for the children/young people in your school about the inspection that occurred recently. It outlines for them some of the main findings and recommendations.

Actions of the school to safeguard children and prevent and tackle bullying

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:	
<i>Child Protection</i>	<i>Bí Cineálta</i>
<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.	<ol style="list-style-type: none">1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils.3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta.

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	02/12/2025
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Review of relevant documents• Discussion with principal and key staff• Interaction with students, including focus groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning during 6 lessons• Examination of students' work• Feedback to principal and relevant staff

School context

Saint Paul's College is a Catholic voluntary secondary school for boys under the trusteeship of the Vincentian Order. The school offers the Junior Cycle, a compulsory Transition Year (TY), the Leaving Certificate and the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP). It caters currently for 648 students.

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.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of teaching and learning in English was very good. In the best lessons, effective learning intentions were shared, learning activities and tasks were varied and tasks provided progressive challenge, with opportunities for regular oral feedback to students on their progress.
- There was some very good practice evident in the formative use of summative assessment of English, however, a sample of copybooks reviewed during the inspection indicated that the frequency of assignment and assessment of student writing varied and there was inconsistency in the nature and frequency of written feedback given.
- English teachers made very effective use of multimodal and audio-visual texts in lessons to support learner experiences and outcomes; students who participated in the student focus group commented very positively on the strength of the teaching of film in the school.
- The quality of planning and preparation was very good; in particular, the inclusion of explicit guidance for team teaching and the identification of students' priority learning needs ensured that English teachers were clear on their responsibilities to support all learners.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good overall and students had regular access to English on the timetable.

Recommendations

- It is recommended that teachers ensure a range of active learning tasks in English lessons, based on clear learning intentions that link to curricular learning outcomes, to provide both access and challenge for learners and to enhance learner experiences and outcomes.
- The subject department should review the assessment of student work to ensure a balance of summative and formative feedback. To further support a consistent process approach to writing, it is recommended that the subject department adopt a collection of texts across all junior cycle years, as a key element of teaching writing.

- In consideration of the cumulative burden on students and teachers of multiple assessments, the school should examine its assessment policies and should plan for the replacement of in-house examinations with Classroom-Based Assessments for students, as required by Circular 0028/2023.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching and learning was very good. In the best lessons, effective learning intentions were shared, learning activities and tasks were varied and tasks provided progressive challenge with opportunities for regular oral feedback to students on their progress. While some very good practice in assessment was noted, other aspects of assessment required further development.
- Instances of highly effective practice to support assessment of oral language were evident in the progressive development of oral presentation skills, supported by clearly communicated expectations, opportunities to engage in extended exploratory talk and developing collaborative skills progressively from individual to pair to group presentation and performance. This highly effective practice should be extended.
- A sample of copybooks reviewed during the inspection indicated that the frequency of assignment and assessment of student writing varied and there was inconsistency in the nature and frequency of written feedback given. Numeric-only feedback was observed in a significant number of instances and this did not provide adequate support to develop students' understanding of quality. It is recommended that the subject department review the assessment of student work to ensure a balance of summative and formative feedback. To further support a consistent process approach to writing, it is recommended that the subject department adopt a collection of texts across all junior cycle years, as a key element of teaching writing.
- The inspection occurred in the week following in-house examinations and very good practice in the use of the summative assessments to provide formative whole-class feedback was observed in a few lessons. Sample answers were shared and annotated on the interactive whiteboard with feedback from students informing highlighted strengths in the responses and providing clarity on what success looked like. This was very good.
- In highly effective lessons, teachers used visual and audio-visual texts as well as real life artefacts to support student engagement with poetry and film. These approaches enhanced the sensory experience of poetry and ensured that students could identify the relevance of genre in shaping narrative expression, which was very good. Students who participated in a student focus group conducted during the inspection reflected that the teaching of film was a key strength in their experience of learning in English.
- In some lessons, teachers made highly effective use of learning intentions that clearly connected to the curriculum and were revisited throughout the lesson to inform lesson progress and student reflection. In other lessons, learning intentions were less effectively deployed. Teachers should work together to share good practice and to develop the use of learning intentions across all lessons to support all learners.
- Questioning was used effectively in some lessons to support students' critical engagement with their texts. In other lessons, low-level recall questions dominated and students were not provided with sufficient time to develop responses that considered a variety of perspectives through discussion with peers. The level of challenge in some lessons was not sufficient to challenge all learners; the use of learning outcomes to inform targeted learning intentions and aligned success criteria is recommended to ensure the explicit development of students' critical and analytical skills.
- In the best lessons, teachers planned for a variety of learning tasks and activities that supported students to engage a range of skills, including oral language, visual literacy, collaboration, reading and writing skills. In other lessons, a lack of variation in tasks

meant that students were passive for prolonged periods. It is recommended that teachers plan for a range of active learning tasks that provide both access and challenge for learners to enhance learner experiences and outcomes.

- English teachers were aware that they have primary responsibility for teaching, learning, and assessment for all young people within their class groups, including those with special educational needs and they accessed relevant support plans to monitor student progress. It is recommended that practices from the *Autism Good Practice Guidance for Schools: Supporting Children and Young People* are employed to further support the development of inclusive pedagogy in mainstream lessons.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support for English was very good overall, however arrangements for Transition Year provision should be revisited to ensure that they meet the timetabling requirements of the Transition Year Programme Statement.
- There was evidence of good engagement with professional learning opportunities by English teachers. The English department had used Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meetings to inform its practice and reflect on ways teachers could best support students during the classroom based assessment (CBA) process. As a result of this reflection, a multi-modal booklet had been developed that explained a range of choices and opportunities available to ensure a greater breadth of engagement with the assessment, which was very good. SLAR facilitator reports indicated that this had worked well.
- Classroom based-assessment (CBA) had not yet replaced in-house examinations. In consideration of the cumulative burden on students and teachers of multiple assessments, the school should examine its assessment policies and should plan for the replacement of in-house examinations with Classroom-Based Assessments for students, as required by Circular 0028/2023.
- The school library was undergoing redevelopment at the time of the inspection and initial scoping for the reintroduction of library classes and the expansion of texts available was underway. This work should be progressed in support of the development of a culture of reading and writing for pleasure.
- Students participated in a range of extra-curricular activities including visits to the theatre and cinema, a short story competition, engagement in debating competitions and the model United Nations, an educational simulation in which students role-play as delegates to discuss and solve global issues. These activities connected English to life outside of school and were supportive of student wellbeing.

3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was very good. In particular, planning for team teaching that identified priority learning needs and clarified the roles and responsibilities of teachers was a strength identified. English teachers collaborated closely with the special education needs' (SEN) core team and the department benefitted from having an English teacher who was qualified in SEN providing input and guidance on practice in the English department.
- There was evidence of regular formal and informal meetings of the English department, and a high level of evidence-informed reflection. This reflection had resulted in recent changes to expand text choice for students and the range of CBA formats, and to reorganise the division of classes to increase uptake of higher level English.
- A range of creative and engaging materials to promote English on the school's open night were available in the subject department folder, the quality of which was indicative of the passion that teachers had for their subject and their motivation to promote it.

- The Junior Cycle and Leaving Certificate examination data were analysed by the English department. It is recommended that the use of attainment data is further extended to identify the pedagogies that support learner outcomes most effectively.

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.



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

For the students of **St Pauls College**
about their learning in **English**

Date of inspection:

02/12/2025

What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the principal and teachers. The inspector met with a group of students to talk to them about their learning in **English**.

What were the main findings of the inspection?



- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good overall; in the best lessons, there was a variety of tasks and the tasks were not challenging enough for all students.
- Some English teachers made very good use of samples of student work to help students to see what effective responses looked like and to identify how they could improve their responses in future.
- During the student focus group held during the inspection, students highlighted that film was taught very well in English lessons in the school.
- Teachers planned very well for English lessons, especially when they planned for specific help that some students might need.

What did the inspector recommend to make teaching and learning better in **English**?



- English teachers should ensure that there is a variety of tasks in lessons that vary in difficulty so that all students learn as effectively as possible.
- The English department should use a collection of students' writing to support the development of process approaches to writing at Junior Cycle.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
Special thanks to the students who participated in the focus group.

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	Examples of descriptive terms
Excellent	Provision that is excellent is exemplary in meeting the needs of learners. This provision provides an example for other schools and settings of exceptionally high standards of provision.	Excellent; exemplary; outstanding; exceptionally high standard; with very significant strengths
Very good	Provision that is very good is very effective in meeting the needs of learners and is of a very high standard. There is potential to build on existing strengths to achieve an excellent standard.	Very good; of a very high quality; very effective practice; highly commendable; very successful
Good	Provision that is good is effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to build on existing strengths in order to address the aspects to be developed and achieve a very good standard.	Good; of good quality; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; strengths outweigh the shortcomings; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist
Requires improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard is not sufficiently effective in meeting the needs of learners. There is need to address certain deficiencies without delay in order to ensure that provision is good or better.	Fair; less than effective; less than sufficient; evident weaknesses that are impacting on learning; experiencing difficulty; shortcomings outweigh strengths; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard	Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard is not meeting the needs of learners. There is immediate need for significant action to address the areas of concern.	Weak; poor; ineffective; insufficient; unacceptable; experiencing significant difficulties; serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated; requiring significant change, development and improvement to be effective