



An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Óige  
Department of Education  
and Youth

# Subject Inspection: English

## REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Patrician Academy
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Mallow Co Cork
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	62330U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	30/09/2025 & 01/10/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	07/01/2026

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# 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.

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.

## 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"><li>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. <i>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.</i></li><li>2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.</li><li>3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</li></ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of <i>Bí Cineálta</i>, <i>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.</i></li><li>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.</li><li>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 <i>Bí Cineálta</i></li></ol>

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

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# Subject inspection

<b>Date of inspection</b>	30/09/2025 & 01/10/2025
<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, including a focus group</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning during 5 lessons</li><li>• Examination of students' work</li><li>• Feedback to principal, deputy principal and relevant staff</li></ul>

## School context

Patrician Academy is an all-boys voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Diocese of Cloyne. At the time of the evaluation, the school had an enrolment of 566 students. The school offered the Junior Cycle programme, a compulsory Transition Year programme (TY), the Leaving Certificate Vocational Programme (LCVP), the Leaving Certificate Applied (LCA), and the Leaving Certificate (Established) (LCE). The school also had five special classes for students with identified needs.

## Summary of main findings and recommendations:

### Findings

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with examples of outstanding practice also observed.
- Respectful relationships were observed in all lessons, between teachers and students and students and their peers and this created a positive environment that was conducive to learning and supportive of student wellbeing.
- Very good learning environments had been developed in a number of well-resourced English classrooms. These included the vibrant display of student work, images of dramatic productions and subject-specific vocabulary to support student learning.
- Overall, subject provision and whole school support for English was very good.
- The English department resourcefully encouraged reading in the school community through a variety of literary activities and initiatives. The school's impressive Patrician Academy Players group demonstrated its commitment to supporting the arts and to enhancing student experiences.
- The overall quality of planning and preparation was good, with examples of exemplary planning in individual lessons observed.

### Recommendations

- To further support and consolidate a process approach to writing, the subject department should incorporate a collection of texts for all junior cycle students to support their understanding of the writing process.
- In consideration of the cumulative burden of assessment on students and teachers, the school should now begin to plan for Classroom-Based Assessments (CBAs) to replace in-house examinations, in line with Circular 0028/23.
- To build on the professional work already evident, the further development of the English department's units of learning should be advanced.

# Detailed findings and recommendations

## 1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The overall quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good, with examples of outstanding practice also observed.
- Respectful relationships were observed in all lessons, between teachers and students and students and their peers. This created a positive environment that was conducive to learning and supportive of student wellbeing.
- In all lessons, teachers shared learning intentions with students. Best practice was observed when these learning intentions were visually reinforced, were incrementally challenging and were clearly framed in terms of what students would know, understand and be able to do by the close of the lesson. While, on occasion, teachers hosted quizzes and lightning round recaps to review and consolidate learning, returning to the learning intentions at the end of the lesson would also be worthwhile to support students in reflecting on their own learning and achievements.
- Highly effective practice was evident in lessons where teachers provided students with group and pair work opportunities to facilitate purposeful discussion. In one example, having already identified features of quality, students shared their responses to a personal essay question to co-create possible approaches. In another excellent example, students rotated responsibility for a variety of tasks in a fairy tale activity. This structured approach to group work should be extended across the department to ensure that when collaborative activities are chosen, they are challenging and meaningful and enhance not only the lesson's learning but also develop the skills that underpin student learning in both junior and senior cycle.
- Further valuable practices utilised to support learner experiences included teachers activating prior knowledge through effective questioning and introducing new material in an accessible and relevant way. The expert scaffolding of exam style poetry questions was also particularly notable. Here, students progressed their learning through the use of colour coded samples which supported them to independently craft their own responses. While the use of success criteria was observed on one occasion, there is scope to more actively utilise these as a tool to support peer assessment and to encourage greater student reflection and autonomy.
- In a significant minority of lessons, teacher input predominated and a modification to lesson design was recommended. Reutilising existing well-planned and well-selected resources as a springboard for discussion and a deeper exploration of the content being considered, would both increase and vary the participation demands on students.
- All teachers used inclusive practices to support students of differing ability and moved around the room during group task phases to give individually tailored support. In all lessons a very good integration of digital resources, visual images and aids, alongside differentiated worksheets helped to progress learning. On one occasion, live captioning was also used to ensure student accessibility and further promote inclusion. In addition, students shared that the school's digital platform served as an effective support to manage and access required material.
- In students' work reviewed, writing was regularly assigned and monitored. This included some excellent examples of formative feedback by teachers with scope to include more specific feedback to direct students to improve their writing on occasion. Students' awareness of the collection of the student's texts varied. To further support and consolidate a process approach to writing, it is recommended that the subject department incorporate a collection of texts for all junior cycle students to support their understanding of the writing process. Incorporating a digital portfolio or hardcopy portfolio approach to writing in first year would be worthwhile.
- In the focus group organised as part of the evaluation, students shared their positive experiences of English. In particular, students noted the benefits of group work as an aid to their learning and of engaging with exemplar material in order to improve their own writing. Some students stated they would welcome additional choice in the assignments

set, while others, in keeping with information previously gathered through the school's self-evaluation process, would like to utilise digital technology more in class through interactive tasks.

- Very good learning environments had been developed in a number of well-resourced English classrooms. These included the vibrant display of student work, images of student dramatic productions and subject-specific vocabulary to support student learning. The visual images of staff members reading in shared school spaces also celebrated the subject and helped to promote a culture of reading.

## 2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- Overall, subject provision and whole school support for English was very good. A very generous timetabled provision was in place for the subject in both junior and senior cycle. In addition, all junior cycle classes were organised on a mixed-ability basis. This positively supported the key principle of inclusion which is at the core of the Junior Cycle programme and should be continued.
- It was positive to note that the English department had used the most recent Subject Learning and Assessment Review (SLAR) meeting to reflect on ways teachers could best support students during the CBA process. As with the department meeting minutes, there was scope here to also consider professional practice more, to inform future planning in relation to CBAs and to move beyond logistical considerations.
- In consideration of the cumulative burden of assessment on students and teachers, the school should now begin to plan for CBAs to replace in-house examinations, in line with Circular 0028/23.
- Very good communication and collaboration was evident between the English department and the special education needs team. Teachers had access to student support plans through the school's digital platform, and were aware of individual students' identified needs and goals. A range of teaching methodologies to support students on the school's continuum of support were also included within the department plan.
- One aspect of the school's improvement plan (SIP) was its focus on digital wellbeing, and a digital learning committee and team had been active in supporting colleagues. The introduction of document protection modules in junior cycle and TY highlighted the school's dedication to effective and responsible digital use, as was teachers' engagement in professional learning opportunities in this area. This positive practice and the leveraging of expertise within the department to advance digital use within the classroom is to be commended.
- Due to constraints on space, no school library was in operation, but the bring a book, take a book initiative resourcefully encouraged reading throughout the school community. The subject was further promoted through junior cycle visits to the local library, dress up days and the impressive Patrician Academy Players group, who have successfully staged a range of dramatic works on an annual basis. This was a significant undertaking on the part of staff and reflected the school's genuine commitment to supporting the arts and to enhancing student experiences.

## 3. Planning and preparation

- The overall quality of planning and preparation was good, with examples of exemplary planning in individual lessons observed.
- A subject plan had been developed. This included schemes of work with themed units and included reference to learning outcomes in the junior cycle English specification for almost all junior cycle years. In this context, the department should ensure that the full set and subset of learning outcomes for all years are embedded in its schemes of work.

- To build on the professional work already evident, the further development of the English department's units of learning is recommended. Teachers should focus on the clarification of key learning intentions within units and also collaboratively design common assessment tasks with agreed success criteria for all year groups. These should be aligned with each unit's key learning intentions and enable students to capture the quality of their learning.
- It was clear from the inspector's engagement with the English department, that they were strong reflective practitioners. This was evidenced through the individual teacher reflections shared, and the mapping of teacher practice with *Looking at our School (LAOS) 2022* in the department plan. The next step should be to collectively and consistently formally share these reflections to inform the department's action planning and development of the subject.
- The subject department plan should be also be updated to include all current and relevant information and an annual subject development planning cycle needs to be developed. This can be supported by the post-primary resource *Looking at English* available on gov.ie.

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.



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For the students of **Patrician Academy**  
about their learning in **English**

Date of inspection:

01/10/2025

### What kind of inspection did your school have?



A subject inspection was completed in your school. The inspector observed lessons and spoke with the deputy 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 standard of teaching, learning and assessment was very good overall.
- Respectful relationships were observed in all lessons.
- The English department resourcefully promoted the subject throughout the school.

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



- A collection of texts should be incorporated into junior cycle to help students with their writing skills.
- School management should review the timetabling of CBAs and in-house exams to ensure students are not being over-assessed.
- The English department plan should clearly say what teachers want students to know.

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
<b>Excellent</b>	<b>Provision that is excellent</b> 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
<b>Very good</b>	<b>Provision that is very good</b> 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
<b>Good</b>	<b>Provision that is good</b> 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
<b>Requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires improvement to achieve a good standard</b> 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
<b>Requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b>	<b>Provision that requires significant improvement to achieve a good standard</b> 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