



An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Subject Inspection: English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Michaels Secondary School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Wellmount Road Finglas Dublin 11
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	607411
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	13/11/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/ Date of issue of report	12/01/2026

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. <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>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 <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>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 <i>Bí Cineálta</i>

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

Subject inspection

Date of inspection	13/11/2025
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 Michael's Holy Faith Secondary School is a voluntary secondary school under the trusteeship of the Le Chéile Trust. The school has a current enrolment of 646 girls and participates in DEIS (Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools), the action plan of the Department of Education and Youth for educational inclusion. The school provides a Junior Cycle Programme, including the Level 2 Learning Programme, an optional Transition Year, Leaving Certificate Applied and Leaving Certificate established. The school has a special class to support students with a diagnosis of autism.

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

- Overall, the quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good with aspects of excellent practice noted.
- English teachers demonstrated exemplary practice in the provision of explicit instruction in literacy and comprehension strategies to support learners.
- Respectful relationships were observed in all lessons, between teachers and students and students and their peers and this created an environment that was conducive to learning and supportive of student wellbeing.
- The quality of planning was good with aspects of very good planning noted; while an excellent reflection tool that captured reflections on how lessons were supporting learners was recently developed by the English department, overall, planning is an area for further development.
- The quality of subject provision and whole-school support was very good; students had regular access to English on the timetable and they were encouraged and facilitated to undertake their studies at the highest appropriate level.

Recommendations

- Teachers should employ a greater variety of tasks to provide more opportunities for exploratory talk and collaborative learning. Tasks should be sufficiently differentiated to ensure that all students are appropriately challenged in all lessons.
- It is recommended that subject plans be reviewed to make more effective use of curriculum learning outcomes. This includes identifying specific learning outcomes in focus and aligning common assessment tasks. Doing so will promote consistency in assessment while also facilitating a greater breadth of text choice.
- At the time of the evaluation, CBAs had not replaced in-house examinations. The school should now begin to plan for Classroom Based Assessments (CBAs) to replace in-house examinations, in line with Circular 0028/23.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. Teaching, learning and assessment

- The quality of teaching, learning and assessment was very good overall and included aspects of excellent practice. Excellent practice was evident in the highly effective use of explicit literacy and comprehension strategies to scaffold and support learners.
- Respectful relationships were observed in all lessons, between teachers and students and students and their peers. This created an environment that was conducive to learning and supportive of student wellbeing.
- In a few lessons, highly effective practice was observed where teachers planned and facilitated discussion-based lessons that provided students with opportunities to engage deeply with texts studied and to present critical perspectives on authorial choice and narrative authority. This was excellent practice and should be extended.
- In some lessons, teachers made highly effective use of visual and audio-visual resources to support learner engagement. This included the effective use of Universal Design for Learning (UDL) strategies to provide multiple means for students to engage with and to represent their learning. Such approaches are highly commended.
- When engaging with sensitive texts and topics, teachers created an environment supportive of student wellbeing through the modelling of positive and appropriate language to support student engagement and responses, which was very good practice.
- Teachers used audiobooks and visual organisers to support students' engagement with texts. Students who participated in a focus group, conducted during the inspection, reflected that they found the use of audiobooks very helpful. They also noted that teachers had designed key moment visual organiser for students to complete at home, which helped consolidate their learning. This approach was highly effective and supported progress for all students.
- Positive relationships between students and teachers were supported in a number of ways: maintaining continuity in the deployment of teachers, providing detailed and targeted written feedback and using conferencing to deliver individual oral feedback to ensure understanding of written comments. Students who participated in a focus group highlighted these approaches as particularly helpful in supporting their learning and further strengthening their relationships with teachers.
- In almost all lessons, teachers carefully structured lesson tasks to develop students' knowledge, skills and understanding incrementally through increasingly challenging and purposeful tasks. In other instances, there was scope to increase the level of challenge to ensure that students were appropriately challenged and fully realised their potential. Teachers should ensure that they design tasks that are both accessible and challenging, ensuring that each lesson is inclusive for students.
- In a minority of lessons, the main learning activity was individual, silent task completion. There was scope to increase the variety of tasks and provide more opportunities for exploratory talk and collaborative learning. Consideration should also be given to the rearrangement of the physical layout of classrooms to support ease of engagement in such tasks.

2. Subject provision and whole-school support

- Subject provision and whole-school support for English was very good. English was timetabled three times a week for all junior cycle students and four times a week for Leaving Certificate Established students; LCA and TY provision met the requirements of the curriculum.
- Classes were taught in mixed-ability lessons in first and second year and students were divided into higher and ordinary levels in third, fifth and sixth year. At Junior Cycle, in keeping with the principle of inclusion, this approach should be kept under review to

ensure it meets the needs of learners and contributes to optimal learner outcomes and experiences in English. A review of concurrent timetabling may also assist in identifying potential opportunities for co-teaching and team teaching approaches to support learning for all in English.

- English teachers reflected that there was a commitment to renewing practices that promote the development of a culture of reading and writing for pleasure in the school. Initiatives to support this include redeveloping the school library, establishing links with the Home School Community Liaison (HSCL) parents' book club and book club for students as well as introducing writing clubs and competitions.
- At the time of the evaluation, classroom-based assessments (CBAs) had not replaced in-house examinations. 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. The results of CBAs should be communicated to students as soon as possible following completion of the Subject Learning and Assessment Review meeting.

3. Planning and preparation

- The quality of planning and preparation was good, with aspects of very good practice noted.
- English in the school benefitted from a well established and experienced core team of teachers with a highly collaborative and collegial department. Record-keeping did not fully reflect the quality of reflection and preparation that was evident during the inspection. While the English department recently developed an excellent reflection tool that captured reflections on how lessons were supporting learners, overall, planning is an area that requires further development.
- To support clarity of learning and assessment, it is recommended that plans are revisited to make more effective use of curriculum learning outcomes. Units of learning, developed collaboratively, should identify specific learning outcomes being targeted and align these with common assessment tasks. Teachers, in collaboration with students, may then choose texts most appropriate to their classes. Overall, there was scope to increase the breadth of text choices for students. Teachers who had initiated change in this area noted that the post-primary book scheme was helpful in supporting these efforts.
- Student learning records were maintained in a variety of ways, both digital and physical. Digital portfolios were used effectively to support learning in Leaving Certificate Applied. Various combinations of copybooks and folders were used with varying effectiveness across other classes. The department should consider developing a consistent approach to the maintenance of student learning records for English informed by consultation with students on what works best for them.
- As a DEIS school, clear links between DEIS and English were identified in the subject department folder. Literacy practice observed was of a consistently high standard across lessons. An analysis of examination attainment data was conducted annually. There was scope to further expand the use of attainment data, with a stronger focus on Junior Cycle, to identify trends over time. The use of attendance data at lesson and school levels would also enrich this analysis.

The draft findings and recommendations arising out of this evaluation were discussed with the principal, deputy principals and subject teachers at the conclusion of the evaluation.



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For the students of **St Michaels Secondary School** about their learning in **English**

Date of inspection:

13/11/2025

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 with some excellent practice noted.
- Teachers used strategies for teaching new words and helped students to understand their novels, plays and poems especially well.
- Students were well behaved and respectful to each other and to their teachers and this made lessons feel safe and comfortable for learning.

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



- Teachers should provide more opportunities for students to work together in groups to help their learning.
- Teachers should make sure that everyone is challenged enough by tasks in English.
- When planning for English, teachers can choose from a broader range of texts to best suit their students.

**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