An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: English
REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St. Joseph's National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Milltownpass Co Westmeath
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	16304J
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	09/03/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	15/06/2026

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations currently report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects and curriculum areas of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), and the redeveloped Primary Curriculum (2025). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject or curriculum area 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. Quality of pupils' learning outcomes
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learning experiences and teachers' practice
3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

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 curriculum evaluation 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 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.

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

<table>
<tr><td colspan="2">During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection and anti-bullying procedures were conducted:</td></tr>
<tr><td>Child Protection</td><td>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>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</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	09/03/2026-10/03/2026
Inspection activities undertaken • Discussion with principal and teachers • Review of relevant documents • Pupil focus-group interview	• Observation of teaching and learning • Examination of pupils' work • Interaction with pupils • Feedback to principal and teachers

School context

St. Joseph's National School is a co-educational school which operates under the patronage of Catholic Bishop Deenihan of Meath. The teaching staff comprised of an administrative principal, three mainstream teachers, two special class teachers, and two special education teachers. At the time of the evaluation, seventy-one pupils were enrolled in the school. The school had two classes for pupils with autism.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English was very good; notable achievement was placed on pupils' learning of early literacy, poetry and writing skills.
- The quality of teaching was very good overall; teachers provided lessons that were engaging and well structured.
- Pupils' learning experiences were good. Teachers ensured relationships and interactions in classrooms supported positive, co-operative and productive learning environments.
- Assessment practices were of a good standard; teachers monitored pupils' early literacy and reading fluency skills consistently.
- The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning was very good.

Recommendations

- Teachers should provide more structured opportunities for pupils to explore and use a wider range of oral language text types and should monitor pupil progression in this area.
- To maximise pupil engagement, teachers should provide active-learning opportunities that promote pupil decision-making and playful learning, supporting the development of critical thinking and oral language skills across all class levels.
- Teachers should ensure that targets are clear and sufficiently individualised to inform teaching approaches and support the monitoring of pupils' progression.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning in English was very good. Pupils demonstrated high levels of engagement and enjoyment in their learning. Pupils engaged in project work, a whole school approach to spellings, grammar activities, comprehension activities, composed poetry and completed book reviews.

Pupils were provided with regular opportunities to write in a variety of genres and in most classes, they demonstrated a good understanding of these genres. Good quality writing samples were noted in pupils' copybooks and samples of pupils' writing at each class level had been retained which showed progression both in pupils' creative writing skills and handwriting as they moved from class to class. Pupils used appropriate writing and presentation styles to create and present texts in a range of formats, and they understood the process of drafting, editing and rewriting. In the writing lessons observed, the tasks provided to pupils did not facilitate more able pupils to progress in line with their ability. Teachers should ensure that writing lessons are structured to appropriately challenge and stretch all pupils.

Pupils listened to, read and responded to a variety of texts. They had access to a range of printed reading materials including core texts, graded readers, novels and library books. Most pupils read with good fluency and expression at their own instructional level across class settings. They used comprehension strategies effectively, such as making predictions and connections. Novels were used in senior classes, and their use was systematically planned for and noted within the whole school plan. Teachers monitored pupils' reading fluency and pupils enjoyed reading classroom and library books pitched at their independent level. Home school links were developed with structured reading logs throughout the school showing clear progression with graded readers across all class levels.

Most pupils were confident communicators and were generally willing to share their ideas and talk about their learning. Where very good practice was observed, teachers explicitly extended pupils' vocabulary. Rhyme and poetry supported the development of oral language skills in junior classes. In senior classes, pupils recalled different types of poetry, and some identified rhyme and alliteration as poetic features. However, in some instances, pupils lacked confidence across the full range of oral language skills. Pupils should be provided with more structured opportunities to engage in information giving, explanation and justification, description, prediction, and reflection. Teachers should provide more structured opportunities for pupils to explore and use a wider range of oral language text types and should monitor pupil progression in this area.

During the focus-group discussion, all pupils agreed that learning English was interesting and fun. Pupils enjoyed completing literacy-based projects and choosing books and novels to read. They emphasised how enjoyable it was to read books with younger pupils in the school and would welcome further opportunities for this. Pupils also reported that they used digital technologies to conduct research for projects, contributed to the school blog, created podcasts and would like more opportunities to complete these. Pupils were provided with opportunities to speak aloud during school assemblies and showcase the work they had completed.

2. Supporting pupils' learning outcomes through learning experiences and teachers' practice

The quality of pupils' learning experiences was good. Pupils were engaged and respectful. All teachers had preparation in place to support the implementation of the *Primary Language Curriculum*. Where very good practice was observed, teachers shared learning intentions and success criteria with pupils and communicated new learning concepts clearly. Teachers displayed effective classroom management skills with respectful interactions observed in all settings.

Teachers ensured pupils experienced a range of teaching methodologies including group work, station-teaching, pair work and individual tasks. In a few settings, pupils had opportunities to engage in playful learning experiences, including sequences, dice and bingo games, which were used to enhance language development. In a few lessons observed, there was a need for a better balance between teacher-directed learning and pupil participation. To maximise pupil engagement, teachers should provide active-learning opportunities that promote pupil decision-making and playful learning, supporting the development of critical thinking and oral language skills across all class levels.

Displays to support pupils' learning in English were a feature in all classrooms. They included aspects of grammar, sight words and effective word walls. Good quality samples of pupils' writing and their project work, in cross curricular subject areas were displayed in classrooms and corridors. Initiatives such as buddy reading with junior classes, celebration of World Book Day and a biannual book fair enhanced pupils' learning experiences in the school. Learning in English was also successfully integrated with learning in other subjects such as Social, Environmental and Scientific Education.

The overall quality of teaching was very good. Teachers were very good communicators and promoted an appreciation of literacy. They demonstrated very effective classroom management skills and lessons were of a good pace and well structured. Noteworthy, was the appropriate integration of pupils from the autism classes to mainstream classes. Teachers responded to individual learning needs and differentiated the learning and teaching activities appropriately.

Teachers assessed pupils' learning through observation, tasks and tests, checklists and samples of work. Pupils' work in copybooks was generally monitored, and, in some cases, written formative feedback was provided to pupils to guide them through the next steps in improving their learning. To further enhance assessment approaches, pupils should be given more opportunities to self-assess and peer-assess their work, helping them to reflect on and progress their own learning.

Support for pupils with special educational needs was effective. Teachers implemented a variety of assessment approaches that supported the identification of pupils' priority learning needs. Commendably, teachers assessed pupils' attainment levels before and after in-class interventions. While priority learning needs were identified in student support plans, targets were, in some instances, too broad. Teachers should ensure that targets are clear and sufficiently individualised to inform teaching approaches and support the monitoring of pupils' progression.

3. The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning

The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning was very good. Leaders and teachers had identified wellbeing as an area of focus for development and had established a student council to promote school inclusion. Commendably, the perspectives of parents and pupils were sought in support of this work. School leaders and teachers collaborated successfully and fostered a culture of improvement, collaboration and creativity in learning. The previous area of focus of SSE included handwriting and the introduction of a specific spelling programme which was having a positive impacted on pupils' learning outcomes.

A whole school plan for English was recently reviewed. The plan was appropriately informed by the *Primary Language Curriculum*, and provided guidance for teachers on reading, writing and oral language. The plan was in evidence in classroom practice for writing and reading. Commendably, the school had created a structured approached to the introduction to a two-year writing genre cycle. While success criteria were established for the monitoring of oral language, school leaders should further develop procedures for the systematic and consistent monitoring and assessment of oral language.

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For the pupils of St. Joseph's NS about their learning in English

Date of inspection: 09/03/2026-10/03/2026

Introduction

Your school had an inspection of English recently. This page for pupils describes what the inspector found and gives ideas about what the school should do to make learning better.

What did the inspector do during the visit?

The inspector visited classrooms and talked to teachers and pupils about the work they were doing. An inspector also met with a focus group of pupils to talk to them about their learning.

What did the inspector find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils were progressing well in their literacy skills.
- Teachers had created good learning experiences for the pupils.
- Teachers made good links between learning in English and other subjects.

What the inspector said the school should do to make learning better

- Pupils should have more active-learning experiences to develop their oral language skills.
- Teachers should assess the development of pupil's oral language skills.
- Teachers should help pupils to check their own work and talk to them about the things they are good at and what they could improve further.

Thank you for taking the time to read this page.
A special thank you to pupils who took part 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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of St. Joseph's National School welcomes the findings of this curriculum evaluation and are very pleased that the overall quality of pupils' learning and teaching in English was judged to be very good. We take great pride in the recognition of our pupils' literacy, writing and poetry achievements, as well as the positive learning environment fostered throughout the school. It is encouraging that our assessment practices, inclusive planning and whole-school collaboration have been affirmed. The acknowledgement of our efforts to promote wellbeing, inclusion and strong home–school links further supports our ongoing commitment to delivering high-quality education for all learners.

Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

In response to the recommendations, we will focus on providing more structured opportunities for pupils to engage with a wider range of oral language text types and to monitor progression in this area more closely. We plan to increase the use of active learning strategies that encourage decision-making, playful learning, and critical thinking across all class levels in conjunction with our implementation of the Revised Primary Curriculum. Targets in support plans will be refined to ensure they are clear, individualised and measurable, allowing for more precise tracking of pupils' progress. Furthermore, we will continue to enhance opportunities for self- and peer-assessment to deepen pupil engagement in the learning process.