An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

English

REPORT

School name	Fr. Cullen Memorial N S
School address	Tinryland Co. Carlow
Roll number	16938E

Date of inspection: 04-12-2019

An Roinn Oideachais
agus Scileanna
Department of
Education and Skills

WHAT IS A CURRICULUM EVALUATION?

Curriculum Evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum* (1999). 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. Quality of pupils' learning
2. Supporting pupils' learning through learner 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.

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.

CHILD PROTECTION

During the inspection visit, the following checks in relation to the school's child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement are prominently displayed near the main entrance to the school.
2. The Child Safeguarding Statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited reported that they have read the Child Safeguarding Statement and that they are aware of their responsibilities as mandated persons.

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

Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection	04-12-2019
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

Fr. Cullen Memorial School is situated in Tinryland, Co Carlow and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. It is a vertical co-educational primary school. There is a unit for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASD) attached to the school. At the time of the evaluation there were 192 pupils enrolled at the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning is good and pupils present as highly-engaged and interested learners who can discuss their writing with ease.
- High quality learning experiences are provided to pupils; there is a need to provide a differentiated-reading programme to pupils in all classes.
- The overall quality of teachers' practice is good, with some exemplary practice also observed.
- The overall effectiveness of school self-evaluation (SSE) and school planning is very good, agreed actions are having significant impact on teaching and learning of writing.
- Assessment practices are developing at the school; there is scope to develop a cohesive approach to the monitoring of pupils' progress in reading.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should collaboratively agree and implement a differentiated-reading programme, at each class level throughout the school and its impact should be systematically monitored and reviewed.
- The school should develop a whole-school approach to the assessment of reading, this should include monitoring of pupils' progress in fluency, comprehension, phonics and attitude towards reading.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is good with a number of pupils achieving at high levels. During classroom interactions, it was evident that pupils are proud of their school, they present as lively, motivated learners who expect to achieve.

The pupils' oral language is well developed. They can use language to explain and discuss their learning. In some highly-effective classes, pupils could ask questions, offer opinions, reason, justify and analyse. During the focus group, conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils were articulate and could reflect on their learning; they gave considered opinions supported by practical reasons. The pupils demonstrated an interest in debating and reported that they would like more regular opportunities to engage in debate. During classroom observations, pupils could recite a range of poems and dramatic pieces.

The school is praised for the considerable work done to date on developing and monitoring the quality of pupils' writing. Copybooks and classroom displays feature high quality samples of pupils' writing and pupils have a very good understanding of the process approach to writing. During the focus group, pupils reported that genre writing was their favourite aspect of English. Pupils in all classes could clearly identify components of explanation writing and the language features associated with that genre. The whole-school plan on writing outlines how all genres will be taught over the academic year.

In reading, some classes, particularly younger classes, demonstrate positive attitudes towards reading. The school recently trialled guided reading in one class. Pupils who engaged in the pilot could identify the benefits of reading at their own level and reported high levels of enjoyment in the programme. In other classes, pupils were observed reading texts that were too hard or too easy and as a result some pupils were frustrated or disengaged during reading tasks. There was evidence of an overreliance on textbook questions and answers in some classes. Pupils at the focus group identified reading, and specifically the use of class-based texts, as the part of English they would like to improve the most. It is recommended that a differentiated programme for reading instruction be provided to pupils at each class level throughout the school. Pupils with additional learning needs and pupils in senior classes should be prioritised for differentiated-reading programmes. Leadership should regularly review and monitor the impact of any reading intervention on pupils' progress.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

High quality learning experiences are provided to pupils. Respectful interactions were observed in all classes and pupils were observed working collaboratively and independently on meaningful tasks. There are very rich learning environments with high quality learning on display in classrooms and on corridors; the whole-school board which celebrates pupils' writing is particularly noteworthy. Pupil voice is highly valued at the school. As a result of a recent survey of pupils' interests a lunchtime library has opened. The very active student council are donating their fundraising profits towards the purchase of books.

During the evaluation, highly-effective station teaching was observed which featured a good balance between pupil-led and teacher-led learning experiences. Meaningful activities including games, responsive questioning, teacher modelling, literacy skills practice and highly-effective direct teaching of content were observed. The challenge for the school will certainly be to identify how to develop and extend these effective practices throughout the school.

Overall, the quality of teaching is good, exemplary practice was also observed. In almost all settings, teachers are very clear communicators and display highly-effective classroom management.

Respectful and kind interactions between teachers and pupils were observed in all settings. Teachers share learning intentions with pupils and make explicit links between reading and writing.

During classroom observations, there was evidence of a consistent whole-school approach to the teaching of writing, a more varied approach to the teaching of reading was observed. Where practice was highly effective, teachers used playful interactions and a multi-sensory approach to teach language skills and provided pupils with purposeful opportunities for applying their new learning. In these lessons, teaching was carefully differentiated in order to support and challenge pupils at their appropriate level. This very good practice should be extended to all settings.

Assessment practices are developing at the school, practice ranged from satisfactory to very good. There is a very high quality whole-school approach to the tracking of pupils' learning in writing. Exemplary practice was noted in the assessment of pupils' learning during *Aistear*. This work provides teachers with useful information that supports teaching and learning. The school should use these effective practices to develop a consistent whole-school approach to the assessment of pupils' reading. The plan should consider how all elements of reading including comprehension, fluency, phonics and pupils' attitudes towards reading can be monitored and assessed. The school should avail of continuing professional development (CPD) on reading for all teachers in order to develop a common vision on reading instruction, collaborative planning and assessment.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of effectiveness of school planning, including SSE is very good. The school has identified genre writing as an area of focus for SSE and an improvement plan has been devised. Vocabulary and language structures for each class level have been identified and are clearly visible in classroom practice. Agreed actions are having significant impact on teaching and learning in the area.

Aspects of the whole-school plan for English are very effective, particularly genre writing, spelling and phonics. These provide specific content and skills to be developed throughout the school and guide and reflect practice in meaningful ways. In developing the reading section of the plan, the school should build upon the existing good practice and consider how learning to be achieved at each class level can be identified and monitored.

Leadership is praised for the energy and dedication shown in bringing about improvements in teaching and learning in writing. In order to extend this good work, leadership should focus on the development of a consistent approach to planning, particularly for pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Instruction for pupils with SEN should begin as early as possible in the term and planning should be based on specific, measurable targets in all cases.

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	***Very good*** 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 ***outstanding*** 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	***Good*** 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 *very good* standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	***Satisfactory*** 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	***Fair*** 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	***Weak*** 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;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management of Fr. Cullen Memorial N.S welcomes the positive findings of this recent evaluation and feels it has been an affirming experience for the whole school community. The Board is delighted to acknowledge the good quality of teaching and learning and very successful curricular leadership for writing that is highlighted in the report.

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

We confirm immediate engagement with the recommendation in the report, in relation to the agreement and implementation of differentiated reading programme at each class level and its systematic monitoring. Staff will further train in the Guided Reading Programme and all staff will attend Inservice in the Primary Language Curriculum.

We confirm that a whole-school approach to the assessment of reading will be implemented following staff discussion, management led focus groups, SEN collaboration, literacy initiatives and continuous professional development.

Táimid fíor bhuíoch mar bhord do na moltai atá faighte againn agus ag súil go mór le iad a chur i gcrích gan mhoill.