An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: English

Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Lacken National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Carrowmore-Lacken Ballina Co Mayo
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	20512P
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	23-03-2023
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	12/06/2023

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999)* and the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019).* 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 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.

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>Anti-bullying</td></tr>
<tr><td>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.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy that meets the requirements of the Anti-Bullying Procedures for Primary and Post-Primary Schools (2013) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides a report to the board at least once a term on the overall number of bullying cases reported (by means of the bullying recording template provided in the Procedures) since the previous report to the board.
3. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, teachers, parents and pupils.</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	23-03-2023
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

Lacken National School, is a rural co-educational primary school located near Killala in County Mayo. The school operates under the Patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killala. The school has three mainstream teachers including a teaching principal, and a special education teacher (SET). The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the Department of Education's action plan for educational inclusion. At the time of the evaluation there were 34 pupils enrolled from junior infants to sixth class.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English was very good.
- Very good quality learner experiences were provided; pupils used a range of resources to support the development of their literacy skills.
- The overall quality of teaching in English was very good.
- There was a highly commendable emphasis on the development of pupils' digital literacy skills to support their learning.
- School assessment practices were effective; pupils' learning in English was tracked and supported as they progressed through the school.
- The effectiveness of school planning was good; the school had fostered improved dispositions and attitudes towards reading.

Recommendations

- Pupils' self-assessment skills should be further developed to enable them to identify areas and strategies for improvement and to gain a deeper sense of ownership over their learning.
- The school should revise the school plan for English to ensure that it better supports and reflects the teaching of the strands and elements of the *Primary Language Curriculum*.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning

Overall, the quality of pupils' learning in English was very good. The school encouraged very positive dispositions towards English. During the lessons observed, pupils presented as enthusiastic and motivated to learn and participated positively in their learning activities.

Pupils from the senior classes who participated in the focus-group meeting stated that they enjoyed English. They understood how their learning in English could be transferred to other

subjects and were given opportunities to do this through report writing, recount writing and oral presentations.

Pupils in all classes were capable and confident in communicating orally with classmates and teachers. Oral language skills were developed systematically in the middle and senior classes through presentations which pupils prepared and delivered to their own classes and to other classes. They were able to explain, justify and communicate their ideas when responding to questions. In all classes, pupils demonstrated the ability to listen actively and engage purposefully with others.

The school had developed a positive culture towards reading. In the focus-group meeting, pupils reported they enjoyed reading and that they had regular opportunities to read for pleasure. The school provided a rich variety of reading materials and sought pupils' opinions when acquiring new reading material. Differentiated reading texts were used to support learning across the school.

Pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of the *conventions of print* and *sentence structure*. Pupils' functional writing was developed systematically and there was evidence of good quality *handwriting and presentation* in pupils' written work. The quality of pupils' creative writing in a variety of genres was commendable. The pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of the writing process and the need to draft and redraft work. In the middle and senior classes, pupils' digital literacy skills were highly developed. Pupils used technology to create and produce a variety of texts, including digital books.

2. Supporting pupils' learning: Learner experiences and teachers' practice

Overall, the quality of pupils' learning experiences were very good. All pupils experienced stimulating print rich environments which supported learning in English. Classroom interactions between pupils and teachers were affirmative and respectful. All pupils had regular opportunities to work collaboratively to support communication and language development. They applied their literacy skills to project work and free-writing activities using a range of resources, including digital technologies. They had access to a wide range of quality reading resources to support learning. Class libraries were well stocked and the school also undertook excursions to the public library.

The quality of teachers' practice was very good overall. Positive and effective classroom management skills were evident in all classes. Lessons were well-structured, paced effectively and supported by high quality visible and recorded preparation. Teachers placed a very good emphasis on the development of high quality vocabulary during lessons. They used a range of higher and lower order questions to activate pupils' prior knowledge and reflect on experiences. They worked collaboratively with other colleagues to reflect on their practice to improve learning for pupils.

Provision for pupils with SEN was highly targeted. Diagnostic assessment was used very successfully to identify and respond to pupils' needs. Very high quality recorded preparation was in place and learning targets were specific and measurable. Assistive technology and digital programmes were used very effectively to support the identified learning needs of pupils in English.

Overall, the quality of assessment was good. Pupils' progress was tracked as they progressed through school. Teachers used a range of approaches including checklists, tests, work samples and observation to assess progress across the three strands of the *Primary Language Curriculum*. While written tasks were well-monitored and corrected regularly, there was scope for teachers to provide more formative feedback. While a commendable focus on self-assessment and peer-assessment was in evidence, teachers should embed these strategies more systematically to ensure pupils gain deeper ownership over their learning.

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

The effectiveness of school planning, including the school DEIS plan, in progressing pupils' learning was good. Teachers worked collaboratively to develop the DEIS plan.The school plan informed practice in the school and, in particular, it provided effective guidance around the use of assessment and the support for pupils with SEN in the school. It is recommended that the English policy be further developed to more effectively reflect the strands and elements and current provision of the *Primary Language Curriculum.*

There was evidence that the DEIS plan had supported improvement in pupils' learning. The school identified oral language and reading for development. Teachers prioritised the development of pupils' dispositions and attitudes towards reading and pupils demonstrated achievements in these two identified areas. It is recommended that the teachers identify more specific and measurable targets to support further improvements in teaching and learning.

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 Lacken NS welcomes this very positive report on the teaching of English in our school. It affirms the high standard of work and the high quality of literacy teaching being undertaken in our school.

Our pupils were recognised for their capable and confident communicating skills, for their enthusiasm and motivation to learn and their ability to listen actively and engage purposefully with others. In particular, the pupils' digital literacy skills to support their learning was highlighted.

Our staff were recognised for their affirming and respectful interactions with pupils, positive and effective classroom management skills and their collaborative discussions and planning with each other to improve learning for our pupils.

The Board of Management was satisfied to read all the regulations relating to Child Protection and Safeguarding and Anti-Bullying have been met.

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

The BOM welcomes the guidance on further developing pupils' self-assessment skills to enable them to gain a deeper sense of ownership over their learning. While there is a commendable focus on self-assessment and peer-assessment in evidence, the teachers will look to embed these strategies more systematically in their planning and classroom practice. Teachers will also provide more formative feedback to the students to inform and promote further learning and development.

The school has been prioritised for sustained support for the Primary Language Curriculum in the 2023/24 year. With the guidance of Oide, we will revise the school plan for English to ensure it better supports and reflects the teaching strands and elements of the PLC as recommended in the report.

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;