An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: English
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Tola
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Tullyglass Shannon Co. Clare
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19552U
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	20/11/2024

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 inspectors 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>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) or Bí Cineálta (2024) and this policy is reviewed annually.
2. The school's current 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	20/11/2024
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

Scoil Náisiúnta Naomh Tola (St Tola's National School) is a co-educational primary school located in Shannon, County Clare. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Killaloe. Staffing included an administrative principal, ten mainstream class teachers and five special education teachers (SETs). The school also had a special class for pupils with autism and a special class for pupils with multiple disabilities. At the time of the evaluation, there were 211 pupils enrolled in the school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The quality of pupils' learning in English was very good. The pupils were making very good progress in their language learning.
- The learner experiences in English were of a very high quality.
- The quality of teaching was very good.
- The quality of assessment was very good, with excellent practice observed in the analysis of assessment information, and in pupils' self-assessment.
- The quality of whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), was excellent. The whole-school plan for English was highly supportive of teachers' practice and pupils' learning.

Recommendations

- The teachers should explore, reflect and celebrate the linguistic diversity of all pupils to further develop pupils' language skills.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The quality of pupils' learning outcomes was very good. The pupils enjoyed their learning and were motivated to learn. The pupils listened actively and shared their learning confidently. In the focus-group discussion, the pupils spoke about their enjoyment of English and taking part in challenging tasks during English lessons.

In almost all classes, the pupils were able to recite rhymes and poems. Early literacy skills were very well-developed, and most pupils demonstrated strong word attack skills. The pupils were making very good progress in their phonological and phonemic awareness. Most pupils demonstrated very good fluency in reading. All pupils had access to differentiated texts and they spoke confidently about their reading. They read and listened to a range of novels. Most pupils demonstrated very good knowledge of the comprehension strategies, including predicting, visualisation and inferring.

There was scope to further develop the pupils' language learning, through making connections across different languages and celebrating the linguistic diversity of the pupils. This could include encouraging pupils to use the languages they know, and to share their language experiences with their peers.

The pupils demonstrated a very good knowledge of the conventions of print. They had a very good understanding of the writing genres. Very good quality writing samples were evident in copybooks and on display throughout the school. In most lessons, the pupils had the opportunity to undertake free writing. Overall, the pupils' work was presented very well. Handwriting was of a very high quality in the majority of cases.

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

Learning experiences were of a very high quality. Interactions between teachers and pupils and between the pupils' themselves were highly respectful and conducive to wellbeing. The pupils were confident and worked well independently. They were given the opportunity to work collaboratively and independently during English lessons. Classrooms were print-rich environments overall. In some instances, there was scope to display the pupils' work more prominently. In some classes, displays of relevant vocabulary were evident.

A range of high-quality literacy supports, such as appropriately challenging readers, digital technologies, and novels, were in use. The pupils had access to class libraries and an accelerated reader library. The pupils would benefit from further access to non-fiction books and books in different languages in class libraries.

The quality of teaching was very good. The teachers demonstrated high expectations of pupils. Classroom management skills were very good. The teachers prepared very effectively for lessons. High levels of reflective practice were evident in teachers' written preparation, which informed the next steps in pupils' learning.

The key principles of the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019)* were used to underpin the teachers' approaches to language learning. The lessons were well structured and paced appropriately. The learning intention was shared with pupils at the beginning of each lesson. The teachers used a range of concrete resources to support pupils' learning.

The quality of support for pupils with identified learning needs was very good. An effective balance of in-class and withdrawal approaches was evident. Student support files were in place which were easy to interpret and share. Targets were specific and measurable, and underpinned by rich assessment data.

Provision for pupils in the special classes was highly commendable. Activities were based on the pupils' needs. This helped to ensure that they made progress in their language learning.

The quality of assessment was very good, with some excellent practice observed. There was a highly commendable balance between pupil-led assessment and teacher-led assessment. A highly effective range of assessment methods, including rubrics, checklists, peer-assessment and self-assessment strategies, and teacher-designed tasks, was in use. Very good quality formative feedback was evident in copybooks.

The teachers made useful observation notes on each pupil's progress. These underpinned planning and preparation and informed in-class interventions. Standardised assessment data was used to inform individual teacher practice, whole-school planning, target setting for in-class initiatives, and the SSE process.

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

The quality of whole-school planning in English was excellent. The whole-school plan for English was reviewed collaboratively and provided comprehensive guidance on the whole-

school approaches to teaching and learning in English. The incremental development of skills was clearly outlined and highly supportive of teachers' practice. The effectiveness of the planning was evident in the range of whole school approaches to literacy observed in each classroom and in each lesson.

For the current cycle of SSE, the school leadership team had gathered evidence to inform specific and measurable targets. A range of strategies was being implemented at a whole-school level. The teachers were closely monitoring progress in the areas of focus, and they engaged in regular collaboration and reflection to inform practice. They had engaged in a large amount of teacher professional learning and they regularly shared their learning with one another.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the pupils of St Tola National School about their learning in English
Date of inspection: 20/11/2024

Introduction

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

Meeting with pupils

The inspectors 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 inspectors find?

Here are some of the main things:

- The pupils' learning in English was very good. They were doing well in speaking, reading, and writing.
- The pupils said they enjoyed taking part in challenging activities which helped them to learn.
- The teachers did a very good job of teaching English.
- The pupils were very good at talking about how they were improving in their learning.
- The school plan for English helped the teachers plan interesting learning experiences for pupils.

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

- Teachers should celebrate the different languages their pupils speak, to help everyone improve their language skills.

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

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 St. Tola's N.S welcomes this very positive report on the teaching of English in our school. The Board is particularly pleased that the report highlighted that interactions between teachers and pupils and pupils themselves were highly respectful and conducive to wellbeing. The Board is pleased that the high quality and varied teaching approaches employed across all class levels ensures that pupils are making very good progress in this subject. We are also delighted that whole school planning in English was found to be excellent and that the commitment by our staff to teacher professional learning was recognised.

We are fortunate in St Tolas that a culture of collaboration and professional dialogue amongst our staff ensures very good outcomes for our pupils.

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 school remains committed to exploring, reflecting on, and celebrating the linguistic diversity of all pupils as part of our efforts to enhance their language skills. We have identified spelling and word work as areas with great potential for pupils to share their knowledge of their first language and collaborate with peers. Additionally, we plan to enrich our class libraries by purchasing more non-fiction books and expanding our collection of books in various languages that represent the diverse linguistic backgrounds of our pupils.

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