An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

Drama

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	S N Realt Na Mara (B)
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Donacarney Mornington Co. Meath
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	18762D

Date of inspection: 31-05-2019

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agus Scileanna
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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 Drama 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 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	31-05-2019
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 • Post-inspection feedback meeting with principal and in-school management team

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta Realt na Mara (B) is also known as Donacarney Boys' National school and operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school is located in an area which has experienced rapid growth in residential housing due to its proximity to a number of large urban towns along the eastern seaboard. The newly developed school building provides seventeen mainstream classes and two special classes for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD). The school currently has 457 pupils enrolled. The teaching staff consists of an administrative principal, nineteen class teachers and six special education support teachers.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Pupils' positive learning experiences in Drama are rooted in a school ethos that reflects a very high value on the Arts in education; the culture of the school nurtures pupils' creativity through a range of strategies that include process and performance-orientated drama.
- The quality of pupils' learning in Drama is good overall: pupils' knowledge and understanding of subject-specific language and key curricular elements are under-developed and this impacts on their ability to reflect on their learning and on drama as a creative process.
- The overall quality of teaching in Drama is good with excellent practice in a few contexts; however, in a number of instances the objectives of the Drama curriculum are not sufficiently addressed in planning or practice.
- Overall, teachers' assessment practices in relation to Drama are good; while teachers in most classes use a range of checklists to monitor aspects of pupils' learning in Drama, progression in learning from class-to-class has not yet been established and Drama is not consistently included in progress reports for parents.
- The effectiveness of school planning, including School Self Evaluation (SSE) is good overall; the whole-school plan for Drama has been recently reviewed and has not yet been fully embedded.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school approach should be adopted to promote subject-specific language and the elements of the Drama curriculum to better enable pupils to reflect on their learning and on Drama as a creative process.

- A whole-school approach should be promoted to ensure that teachers make the objectives of the Drama curriculum explicit in their individual planning through discrete Drama lessons and integrated learning experiences.
- Teachers should consistently include Drama in their oral and written reports for parents to ensure that parents are fully informed about pupils' learning across all curricular subjects.
- Progression in pupils' learning throughout the year and from class-to-class should be monitored on a whole-school basis; greater use of teachers' monthly progress reports would assist in this regard.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of pupils' learning in Drama is good. Pupils demonstrated positive dispositions and participated whole-heartedly in the observed lessons with due respect for each other and the drama processes. Pupils in the infant classes, in particular, displayed commendable conviction and confidence during their imaginative play and benefit from the successful adoption of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework*. Many pupils could articulate their role-play intentions independently, as observed when a pupil stated, 'I am going to be Neil Armstrong's Dad'. During the focus group discussion conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils reported positively on their learning in Drama and, in particular, about their enjoyment of performances in school concerts and assemblies. Pupils also spoke about how role-play and depicting characters helped them to better understand History and English novels. A whole-school emphasis on active and collaborative learning along with a policy of integrating Drama with other curricular subjects, including Irish, has provided pupils with many valuable, authentic opportunities to communicate and to engage in make-believe play and collaborative making of drama. However, pupils' knowledge and understanding of the subject-specific language and key curricular elements are under-developed and this impacts on their ability to achieve the objectives of the strand unit. A whole-school approach should be adopted to promoting subject-specific language and the elements of the Drama curriculum to better enable pupils to reflect on their learning and on Drama as a creative process.

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

The quality of pupils' learning experiences in Drama is good overall with pupils experiencing a variety of Drama activities through their engagement with whole-school performances and participation in class-based, integrated, learning experiences. Periodically, pupils have opportunity to enjoy performances in Drama outside the school and many pupils reported positively on their experiences of visiting theatres and enjoying external performances. School leaders have been successful in securing the involvement of the school in a Creative Ireland Programme; this involves the fourth class pupils participating in multi-disciplinary arts initiative which has an environmental theme and progresses the pupils' awareness and understanding of sustainable development through the medium of drama, dance and the visual arts. Drama is also provided as an after-school activity for pupils who wish to pursue a particular interest in this area. Pupils would benefit from being involved in the drawing up of Drama contracts within their class groupings to optimise their sense of ownership in the creation of safe spaces for learning experiences in Drama.

The overall quality of teaching in Drama is good. In a few settings, teaching was noted to be of an excellent standard. Where best practice was noted, the objectives of the Drama curriculum were foregrounded and fully realised with pupils being afforded regular opportunity and support to make

connections in their learning, explore new ideas and collaborate with their peers on possible pathways of action. Concepts, such as social justice and racism, were explored with great sensitivity and insight in a number of lessons observed during the evaluation. *Aistear* is well-established and facilitates pupils' creative development. However, in a number of instances, the objectives of the Drama curriculum are not sufficiently addressed in planning or practice; the recently reviewed whole-school plan for Drama does not yet inform teachers' individual practice in a significant number of contexts. A whole-school approach should be promoted to embed the whole-school plan for Drama in practice and ensure that teachers make the objectives of the Drama curriculum explicit in their individual planning through discrete Drama lessons and integrated learning experiences.

During the observed lessons, teachers demonstrated commendable professional skills as they presented well-structured and suitably paced lessons in inclusive learning environments. Resources, including digital resources, are used purposefully to stimulate pupils' interests and to support pupils to experiment with symbolism. Teachers demonstrate a good understanding of the fictional lens and a capacity to be playful in their interactions with pupils; they deploy a range of appropriate strategies and games including Teacher-in-Role, hot-seating and Conscience Alley. Story is used very effectively on a whole-school basis to engage pupils in dramatic activity.

Overall, the assessment practices for Drama are good. Teachers use a range of checklists to monitor aspects of pupils' learning in Drama in most classes, although progression in learning from class-to-class has not yet been established. Review of assessment documentation indicate that pupil self-assessment has commenced. Drama is not consistently included in oral and written progress reports for parents. Teachers should consistently include Drama in their oral and written reports for parents to ensure that parents are fully informed about pupils' learning across all curricular subjects.

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

The effectiveness of school planning, including School Self Evaluation (SSE) is good overall. The whole-school plan for Drama has been recently reviewed but has not yet been fully embedded on a whole-school basis and the school leadership team is advised to ensure that this plan now informs teachers' individual practice. School leaders have been successful in leading the school community in a continuous, collaborative process of self-evaluation and improvement and elements of school improvement plans (SIPs) for other curricular areas, such as Literacy have impacted positively on the quality of teaching and learning in Drama. It is evident that school leaders promote creativity in learning and members of the in-school management team (ISM) have been proactive in sourcing suitable programmes, resources and opportunities that are used purposefully to enrich pupils' learning experiences in Drama.

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 welcomes the positive inspection of Drama in our school. The report acknowledges the efforts of the teachers, and management in our school, reflecting our very high value on the Arts in the education of our pupils. The Board is delighted that excellence in teaching has been acknowledged where evident, that the Infant classes have in particular benefitted from Aistear, the framework for developing their communication, exploration and thinking skills through play, and that the inspection noted the emphasis on active and collaborative learning.

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 Board of Management of Bunscoil Buachaillí Réalt na Mara welcomes the subject inspection report and its affirmation of the quality of school planning and of teaching and learning in Drama. The school has already begun to address the report`s recommendations: All written and oral reports to parents now include information about pupils` learning in drama along with the other curricular subjects. All teachers now include drama explicitly in their planning with assessment checklists and monthly reports used to both monitor the teaching of drama, and pupil`s progress in drama, across the whole school. Planning time has been set aside to ensure that a whole school approach is adopted to promote subject specific language and elements of the Drama curriculum. The school is committed to building on the good practice already affirmed.

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;