An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Na gCoillíní
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Meelick Swinford County Mayo
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	02912G

Date of inspection: 13-11-2019

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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 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	13-11-2019
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

Scoil Na gCoillíní (Meelick National School) is a co-educational primary school located approximately five kilometres from Swinford, County Mayo. It operates under the patronage of the acting Catholic Bishop of Achonry. There are four mainstream class teachers and two special education teachers (SETs); one of the SETs is shared with another school in the locality. There were eighty-seven pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of learning in English is good; there is scope to extend pupils' reading skills.
- The learning experiences are very good.
- The overall quality of teaching is good with some very good practice observed and all teachers demonstrate commitment to improvement.
- While the school has extended its range of teaching models to provide for early intervention, this provision requires review.
- Whole-school planning for English is effective and teachers' individual planning is good in most aspects.
- The school has engaged very positively with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process with actions for improvement in literacy embedded in all classrooms.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Small-group focused instruction in literacy, which is aligned to pupils' level of ability, should be implemented to support and improve pupils' reading achievement.
- Current in-class models of support in literacy should be reviewed and extended.
- Mainstream class teachers should prepare short-term plans on a fortnightly basis.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is good. During the evaluation, most pupils engaged effectively with learning tasks and presented as motivated and interested in their learning activities. Pupils in the focus group indicated that they enjoy their learning in English.

Overall, pupils demonstrated competence and confidence in discussing their learning in English. Their expressive language skills are developed through presentations of work and engagement in drama activities. They are provided with opportunities to present their project work to other classes. In all settings, pupils' vocabulary is at a high level and is being extended through discrete

oral language topics and the identification of key vocabulary. The majority of pupils could recite a range of poems and rhymes confidently; this practice should be extended to all classes. To support this, details of poems to be learned at each class level should be identified, agreed and included in the school plan.

Pupils in the infant and junior classes demonstrated good phonological awareness, letter and word recognition and word-attack skills. Novels are explored appropriately in middle and senior classes. Pupils read confidently and their level of fluency is increasing as they move from class to class. However, small-group focused instruction in literacy, which incorporates the use of differentiated texts and novels appropriate to pupils' levels of ability, should be implemented to support and improve pupils' reading achievement. In-class models of support teaching should be used to support this work. Pupils apply comprehension strategies effectively to enhance their understanding of reading material.

Pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of the writing genres and samples of their writing were displayed in classrooms and on corridors. They have frequent opportunities to experiment with the writing process in their free writing copies. In the focus group, pupils ably described their variety of writing tasks for different purposes. Overall, pupils' handwriting is of a high quality with some handwriting and presentation being of a very good standard. It is commendable that the school has identified spelling as an area for improvement, with individual teachers investigating alternatives to the use of workbooks.

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

The overall quality of learning experiences in English is very good. Very positive and respectful interactions between teachers and pupils were observed in all classrooms during the evaluation.

All lessons observed included opportunities for pupils to work collaboratively and to discuss their learning. *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is supporting pupils' social, communication and early language skills effectively in the infant settings. A good range of appropriate graded reading books and novels is available in classrooms. The reading process is modelled well by teachers and pupils are also provided with opportunities to engage in shared reading with parents, buddy reading and independent reading. Pupils' use of digital technologies to support learning in English is highly commendable. All pupils have opportunities to apply their learning to other curricular areas. Many commendable co-curricular activities supports the pupils' learning in English. For example, senior pupils participate in the Junior Entrepreneur Programme and a number of pupils have been successful in handwriting competitions. Further opportunities for pupils to engage with authors and poets should be explored.

The overall quality of teaching, including teaching for pupils with special educational needs (SEN), is good; examples of some very good practice were also observed. All teachers demonstrate enthusiasm for their work and commitment to improvement. They create stimulating print-rich environments in their classrooms. They use various approaches such as talk and discussion and play-based methodologies to provide pupils with opportunities to consolidate their literacy skills. Mainstream class teachers and SETs work collaboratively to provide in-class models of support and station teaching, to support early intervention. Going forward, there is scope to review this provision and extend it further to middle and senior classes.

Teachers use a variety of assessment strategies effectively to monitor pupil progress. A range of assessment practices was observed during the evaluation, including checklists, work samples, teacher-designed tests, standardised and diagnostic tests. Pupil profiles were available in each setting and digital portfolios were introduced recently. Assessment for learning (AfL) strategies were observed in all settings and self-assessment practices are evident across the school. To enhance the good work underway already, the school should administer a general intelligence test and running records in reading. A few teachers share the learning intention and success criteria of lessons with pupils; this good practice should be extended to all settings.

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

The overall quality of whole-school planning for English is effective. A detailed school plan for English provides valuable guidance for teachers. It is intended that this will be reviewed and updated in line with the *Primary Language Curriculum* after all staff have received training. Classroom teachers prepare long and short-term planning documentation which reflects the whole-school English plan. However, short-term planning is presented on a monthly basis instead of fortnightly as is outlined in Rule 126 of the *Rules for National Schools.* Teachers in support settings use The National Educational Psychological Service's (NEPS) Continuum of Support documentation. SETs prepare student support files and present weekly planning documentation.

The school has engaged very positively with the SSE process and actions for improvement have been identified in literacy. The school identified writing, comprehension and grammar as areas of focus. During the evaluation, it was evident that these practices are well embedded in classroom experiences. The current focus on the use of digital learning technologies is having a very positive impact on learner experiences and teachers' practice.

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 and staff of Scoil Na gCoillíní, Meelick welcome the findings of the recent evaluation and are pleased to work on the recommendations it contains. The Board welcomes the recognition of good standards of teaching and learning. The Board also welcomes the recognition in the report of the high standard achieved in the following areas:

- The overall quality of learning experiences in English is very good.
- Very positive and respectful interactions between teachers and pupils were observed in all classes.

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 staff have already commenced work on the recommendations. These are outlined below:

- The school are looking into a graded reading scheme where children from senior infants and up will read at their own level.
- SETs are currently re-evaluating in-class support and a new model will be up and running soon. This will incorporate more in-class support.
- The staff are in the process of developing a fortnightly plan that will suit everyone's needs. Staff had prepared monthly plans which they were previously advised to implement.

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;