An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Nuachabháil
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Gort A tSléibhe Baile Mhic Ealgóid Trá Lí
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	10326M

Date of inspection: 15-01-2019

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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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	14-01-19: 15-01-2019
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 Náisiúnta Nuachabháil is a Catholic, mainstream school situated in the parish of Ballymacelligott. School staff consists of a principal, four mainstream teachers and two special education teachers, one of whom is shared with two neighbouring schools. There are 145 pupils enrolled in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- While the overall quality of pupil-learning outcomes in English is good, there remains a need to ensure that pupils are facilitated to apply the oral, reading and writing skills they have acquired to a wider range of activities.
- The overall quality of learning experiences provided to pupils is good.
- Teaching in the lessons observed was of a high standard with some exemplar lessons noted.
- High quality support is provided to pupils with additional learning needs.
- An appropriate range of assessment strategies is used by teachers to evaluate pupil progress but approaches vary significantly from class to class.
- The quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils' learning is fair.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A systematic review of current provision in English should be undertaken to ensure that pupils experience an integrated literacy programme which enables them to apply their oral, reading and writing skills to a wider and more challenging range of activities.
- The school should ensure that a whole-school approach is taken to ascertaining pupil progress in each of the three strands and that data generated informs both teacher practice and the organisation of support for pupils.
- The SSE process be utilised to a much greater extent to promote improvements in pupil learning outcomes and experiences.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupil learning outcomes in English is good.
- Pupils read with accuracy, fluency and expression and emergent reading skills are very comprehensively progressed in the infant and junior classes. Their phonological and phonemic skills are well developed throughout the school. However, there is a need to ensure that they are facilitated to engage with a wider range of reading genres. Opportunities for pupils to examine similarities and differences in various types of texts should be systematically provided. Comprehension strategies should be explicitly taught to enable pupils to engage with and understand more challenging materials, including digital texts.
- Pupils' oral language is good. They speak on a range of topics with confidence and competence utilising an extensive vocabulary. In order to progress pupils' learning in this area, they should be provided with greater opportunities to utilise their language skills in a variety of social contexts.
- The quality of pupils' writing is satisfactory. While they present their written work neatly observing the conventions of grammar, punctuation and spelling, they should be provided with increased opportunities to write for sustained lengths of time and for different audiences. It is recommended that a whole-school approach to developing the pupils' skills in writing in various genres be implemented.
- In progressing pupil learning in English, a systematic review of current provision should be undertaken. This review should ensure that pupils experience an integrated literacy programme which enables them to apply their oral, reading and writing skills to a wider and more challenging range of activities.

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

- The overall quality of support for pupils' learning is good.
- The quality of pupil learning experiences is generally good. In the course of a focus-group interview, pupils spoke eloquently of the pleasure they derive from learning English. Group work, the exploration of the novel and the application of language skills to cross-curricular projects were cited as highlights of their learning experiences. Active learning is very successfully progressed in the infant and junior classes. The Aistear programme is skilfully utilised to ensure that pupils are facilitated to engage in a very wide range of purposeful literacy activities from which they derive much pleasure and benefit. This cross-curricular and integrated language approach should be promoted in all classes.
- Supportive learning environments, characterised by respectful and harmonious relationships between teachers and pupils and among pupils was a feature of all learning settings visited. Pupils' work is attractively displayed and celebrated in classrooms and corridors.
- Teachers prepared well for the lessons observed and skilful use was made of resources to support pupil learning. Staff are praised for their engagement with the *Primary Language Curriculum* in the preparation of long and short-term planning though an increased focus on learning outcomes to inform the focus of lessons is advised. An integrated approach should be taken to the teaching of the three strands of the English curriculum. This should ensure that pupil learning is effectively scaffolded and that they are facilitated to apply their learning with the strands and across the curriculum.

- Teaching in the lessons observed was of a high standard with some exemplar lessons noted. Where very good teaching was practised, pupils were actively engaged in suitable challenging and stimulating activities which purposefully progressed their learning.
- High quality support is provided to pupils with additional learning needs. Special education teachers prepare comprehensive intervention programmes for the pupils with whom they work. Significant progress is noted in the reorganisation of resources to ensure that pupils with the greatest needs receive the most support. The further refinement of classroom and school support plans is advised to ensure that in-class support, team-teaching and station teaching activities are utilised to best effect.
- An appropriate range of assessment strategies is used by teachers to evaluate pupil progress and attainment. These assessment approaches vary significantly from class to class. While individual teachers are cognisant of the progress that pupils are making, there remains a need to ensure that a whole-school approach is taken to ascertaining pupil progress in each of the three strands. Assessment data should also be utilised more purposefully to inform teacher practice, to identify pupils in need of targeted support and to inform classroom and school support plans.

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

- The quality of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning is fair. Staff are praised for the recent review of the whole-school English plan but further work is required to ensure that clearer guidance is given to teachers on the implementation of the English curriculum. Particular attention should be paid to the identification of whole-school approaches to the teaching of English and to devising learning opportunities for pupils across and beyond the curriculum.
- Scope exists to develop the leadership of school self-evaluation processes and teachers' collective practice. School improvement initiatives in literacy were undertaken in the past but these were not effectively implemented, monitored or evaluated. It is recommended that the SSE process be utilised to a much greater extent to promote improvements in pupil-learning outcomes and experiences. This will necessitate the taking of a collaborative approach to the identification and implementation of actions which are explicitly focused on improving pupil-learning outcomes, experiences and teachers' individual and collective practice.
- Teachers have access to a wide range of resources which are well utilised to support teaching and learning. The proposed purchase of tablets and digital devices should further enhance pupil learning experiences.

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;