An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna

Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

History

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	The Billis National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Glaslough County Monaghan
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	20246U

Date of Evaluation: 09-12-2016

AN ROINN OIDEACHAIS AGUS SCILEANNA | DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION AND SKILLS

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 History under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils' learning
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.

The board of management of the school was given an opportunity to comment on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

Curriculum Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Date of inspection	09-12-2016
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

The Billis National School is a two-teacher co-educational school operating under the patronage of the Anglican Bishop of Clogher. There were forty-four pupils enrolled at the time of this inspection.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in History is very good; pupils are afforded a rounded historical experience while developing their knowledge and understanding of history.
- Pupils' skills as historians are incrementally and productively developed.
- Pupils' learning experiences in History are very good, overall.
- The quality of teaching is very good; teachers methodically prepare and effectively implement an age-appropriate programme for pupils
- A clear, cyclical whole-school plan for national and international history has been devised and informs teachers' practice; the local history plan is not yet fully developed albeit pupils are afforded opportunities to study local history.
- Various modes of assessment in History are used at individual classroom level; a whole-school approach to assessing and recording pupil progress is not being implemented currently.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In order to monitor pupils' progress across all strands of the curriculum, a whole-school approach to assessment should be developed and the format of the monthly progress reports reviewed.
- The local history plan should be further developed to provide guidance for teachers in its implementation.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING IN HISTORY

- The overall quality of pupils' learning is very good. Pupils have acquired knowledge and concepts while simultaneously developing skills and attitudes in History commensurate with their ages and abilities. Story is used to develop pupils' understanding of chronology to good

effect. Pupils have a good understanding of change and the concept of time through exploring aspects of personal and family history. While commendable emphasis is placed on developing pupils' understanding of History orally in the junior classes, pupils should also be encouraged to record historical findings and learning in a variety of ways. Pupils in middle and senior classes have developed an enhanced understanding of their own country and the wider world through studying elements of national and international history.

- Pupils are confident in their ability to work as historians; they use and interpret evidence, selecting, recording and communicating their findings using a variety of techniques and media. Pupils in all classes have a strong sense of empathy gained through dramatic interpretation and reconstruction of the past which has also enhanced language development. Pupils gain an understanding of the common features of the locality and the lives of people who have lived there through the exploration of elements of their locality. Their historical understanding has been enriched by regular off-site visits to places of historical interest and oral accounts from people who have lived through historical events. History is skilfully integrated with other subjects particularly Art, Irish, Drama, Social Personal and Health Education and English.
- In a focus group with pupils, they presented as highly motivated and enthusiastic with regard to the learning of History. They stated that they enjoyed History especially the cooperative learning opportunities afforded them, their research projects and historical trips.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING IN HISTORY: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

- Pupils' learning experiences in History are very good, overall. The school environment promotes an appreciation of History. Pupils are enabled to work as historians, independently and collaboratively and are given several opportunities to examine relevant artefacts. All pupils were facilitated to participate actively in the lessons observed through well-planned collaborative learning opportunities. Teachers took account of pupils' various learning styles through effective differentiation and scaffolding.
- The overall quality of teaching observed ranged from good to very good. Teachers' planning and preparation is based on the school plan and facilitates effective practice for teaching and learning. Through structured well-researched lessons and curriculum-appropriate approaches, teachers facilitate gainful, active and progressive learning in History.
- The overall quality of assessment is good. Effective use is made of discussion and pupil presentation to elicit pupils' prior experience and understanding of topics. Other assessment methods include teacher-designed tasks, editing of written work and of pupil projects. In order to monitor pupils' progress across all strands of the curriculum, a whole-school approach to assessment should be developed. The format of the monthly progress records should also be reviewed to analyse the programme implemented.

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

- The overall quality of school planning in progressing learning in History is good. A clear whole-school plan, outlining the content of the programme, informs the implementation of the History curriculum and promotes continuity and progression in pupils' learning. The plan content is reviewed and updated annually. The local history plan should be further

developed to provide guidance for teachers in its implementation. Whole-school approaches to the incremental development of pupils' skills should also be delineated to garner the current good practice in the school.

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 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;

Published March 2017 / Foilsithe Márta 2017