An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

Curriculum Evaluation: English
Report

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St. Mary's NS, Grange
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballybrusa Grange Via Youghal
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	17997C
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	12/03/2025
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	16/05/2025

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects of the *Primary School Curriculum (1999),* the *Primary Language Curriculum (2019)* and the *Primary Mathematics Curriculum (2023).* 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 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 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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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

Dates of inspection	11/03/2025 and 12/03/2025
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

St. Mary's National School is a rural co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Waterford and Lismore. The staff comprised three mainstream class teachers, including the principal, and one special education teacher. Sixty pupils were enrolled in the school at the time of the evaluation.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- Overall, the quality of pupils' learning in English was very good; pupils engaged productively in classroom activities and displayed a positive attitude to their learning.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences and teachers' practice was very good; pupils in all classes were provided with opportunities to engage in playful and engaging learning activities.
- Effective levels of preparation for teaching and learning were in evidence.
- Teachers used a range of assessment strategies effectively to evaluate pupils' progress in aspects of English.
- The overall effectiveness of school planning in progressing pupil's learning was very good.

Recommendations

- Team teaching and in-class models of support should be reviewed to ensure that they are clearly addressing the requirements of pupils with the greatest level of need; there should be clear targets established for the intervention and the impact on pupils' progress reviewed on an ongoing basis.
- Approaches to effective pupil self-assessment should be extended, along with a systematic whole-school approach to the correction and editing of pupil written work.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

Overall, the quality of pupils' learning in English was very good. Pupils engaged productively in classroom activities and displayed a positive attitude to their learning. They expressed themselves with confidence and demonstrated competence in a range of skills including elaborating, justifying their opinions and the use of persuasive language. This was exemplified in their enthusiasm when discussing recently prepared debates in senior classes. There was a commendable focus on vocabulary development in most classes with opportunities to use a range of strategies to determine word meaning, including the use of dictionaries.

In infant classes, pupils were familiar with the conventions of print and showed good levels of phonological awareness. A range of approaches to the development of phonics skills was also observed in infant classes.

Pupils had access to a rich and varied range of reading materials in all classes. A culture of reading was created through the opportunities for social reading at school and at home. Some highly effective use of novels was observed and pupils reported on this enthusiastically during the focus group discussion. The emphasis on developing pupils' comprehension skills enabled them to explore and investigate meaningfully what they read. Access to a broader range of texts, including digital and authentic texts should be prioritised to further challenge pupils and to promote higher-order thinking skills. Pupils responded positively to poetry with opportunities provided for pupils to compose their own poems.

Pupils had regular opportunities to write in different genres with samples of high-quality recount, procedural and persuasive writing noted in copies and displays. The productive use of the writing process was in evidence with drafts and final versions of texts created by pupils, on display and in class-produced booklets. Handwriting was well-developed with commendable focus on the presentation of work across the school.

Aspects of digital literacy skills were progressed in all classes through the use of games and presentation of written work. As identified by school leaders and teachers, there was scope to systematically expand the breadth of these skills throughout the school. This could include the critical literacy lens to enable pupils to actively identify, analyse and challenge the perspectives offered in texts.

During the focus group, pupils were very positive about their learning experiences and reported on their enjoyment of active and playful approaches. They described their love of playing games and getting to read in a variety of different ways. They also spoke enthusiastically about the real-life opportunity to conduct research and make presentations that was provided through participation in the Junior Entrepreneur programme.

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

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences and teachers' practice was very good. Interactions between pupils and teachers were respectful in the lessons observed. Pupils, in all classes, were provided with opportunities to engage in playful and engaging learning experiences. They participated in productive collaborative work which included well-structured pair and group activities that were carried out respectfully. Lessons were well-resourced with effective differentiation of learning activities noted in the majority of classrooms.

Teachers placed a strong emphasis on the acquisition and progression of literacy skills and they enthusiastically adopted a range of appropriate programmes. Classroom learning environments were well-organised and print-rich, with various prompts which helped to scaffold pupils' learning experiences. Pupils' literacy achievements were celebrated with samples of written work on display.

Effective levels of preparation for teaching and learning were in evidence. Where practice was most effective, teachers had a clear focus for new learning which was based on the learning outcomes and progression continua of the Primary Language Curriculum (2019) (PLC). It was also informed by the established learning requirements of individual pupils. This highly effective practice should be extended across the school to ensure continuity and progression across the three strands of the PLC. Teachers' ongoing engagement with professional development and their sharing of ideas and new learning was a highly commendable feature of practice in the school.

Teachers used a range of assessment strategies effectively to evaluate pupils' progress in aspects of English. Among the data gathered were teacher observations, teacher-designed tests, portfolios and standardised tests. In some classes, teachers provided effective formative feedback to pupils on their writing tasks that encouraged them to reflect on their progress and

identify how they might extend their learning. Effective self-assessment strategies such as the use of rubrics and ‘two stars and a wish’ was also observed. Pupils were taught how to critically and respectfully provide feedback to their peers. There was scope to further extend the use of these approaches and to develop a systematic whole-school approach to the correction and editing of pupil written work.

Very good and positive relationships have been established between special education teachers and the pupils, and there was meaningful collaboration between teachers. Learning needs were identified by teachers at an early stage and pupils were provided with a range of support activities through both in-class interventions and withdrawal of individuals and groups. Team-teaching and in-class models of support should be reviewed to ensure that they are clearly addressing the requirements of pupils with the greatest level of need; there should be clear targets established for the intervention and the impact on pupils’ progress reviewed on an ongoing basis. The very good practice in establishing specific, measurable and timed targets in some school support plans should be extended.

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

The overall effectiveness of school planning in progressing pupil’s learning was very good. A culture of collaboration and improvement had been very successfully established. The recently reviewed plan for English provided useful guidance on whole-school approaches to writing genres and comprehension skills, phonics and grammar. This plan should be developed on an ongoing basis to support the systematic, whole-school implementation of all aspects of the PLC.

The SSE process has been used effectively in the school to achieve improvements across a range of areas, with a current focus on Mathematics and wellbeing. There should be ongoing use of this process to support decisions around changes to practices in literacy.

An Roinn Oideachais
Department of Education

For the pupils of St Marys N S Grange about their learning in English

Date of inspection: 11/03/2025 and 12/03/2025

Introduction

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

What did the inspector do during the visit?

The inspector visited classrooms and talked to teachers and pupils about the work they were doing. The inspector also met with a focus group of pupils to talk to them about their learning.

What did the inspector find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils' learning in English was very good and they had a positive attitude to their learning.
- Pupils in all classes were given opportunities to have playful and enjoyable learning experiences.
- Teachers prepared well for teaching and learning.
- Teachers used lots of ways to assess how pupils were doing in English.
- The school had a plan to ensure that pupils make good progress in their learning.

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

- When teachers work together in classes, they should plan carefully to ensure that it helps pupils who might need extra support.
- Pupils should get more chances to assess their own learning.

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

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