An Roinn Oideachais
agus Óige
Department of Education
and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	St Olaf's National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Balally Drive Dundrum Dublin 16
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	19319O
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	26/02/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	16/06/2026

What is a curriculum evaluation?

Curriculum evaluations currently report on the quality of teaching and learning in specific subjects and curriculum areas of the Primary School Curriculum (1999), and the redeveloped Primary Curriculum (2025). They affirm good practice and make recommendations, where appropriate, to aid the further development of the subject or curriculum area in the school.

How to read this report

During this inspection, the inspectors 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/young people 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 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.

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>Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
<tr><td>1. The name of the DLP and the Child Safeguarding Statement (CSS) are prominently displayed near the main door of the school / in the reception area. Following the school's adoption of the updated procedures 2025, it is also required to display a student-friendly version incorporating the name of the DLP beside the CSS.
2. The school's child safeguarding statement has been ratified by the board and includes an annual review and a risk assessment.
3. All teachers visited were aware of who to go to if they had a child protection concern.</td><td>1. The school has developed an anti-bullying policy using Appendix A of Bí Cineálta, it is reviewed annually (or earlier if required) and includes a student/pupil friendly version that is displayed where students/pupils and the school community can see it.
2. The school's anti-bullying policy is published on its website and/or is readily accessible to board of management members, staff, parents and students/pupils.
3. The board of management minutes record that the principal provides an update to the board at each ordinary board meeting that meets the requirements of Bí Cineálta</td></tr>
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The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	25/02/2026 – 26/02/2026
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 Olaf's National School is an urban co-educational primary school that caters for pupils from infants to sixth class. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin. At the time of the evaluation, there were 586 pupils enrolled in the school. The teaching staff comprised an administrative principal, an administrative deputy principal, twenty-three mainstream class teachers, six full-time special education teachers and a part-time special education teacher shared with another school.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English was very good. Pupils presented as highly motivated learners who engaged enthusiastically and conscientiously in their learning activities.
- The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences in English was very good. Teachers had established positive learning environments and pupils were enabled to share their learning with authentic audiences.
- The overall quality of teaching in English was very good, with practice observed ranging from good to exemplary.
- The quality of assessment was good. Teachers employed a suitable range of teacher-led assessment approaches to gather information about pupils' learning.
- The overall quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils' learning in English was very good.

Recommendations

- To further enhance the quality of pupils' writing, teachers should extend their provision for the emergent writing process in the infant classes and enable the older pupils to revise their writing in response to formative feedback.
- Teachers should strengthen their use of assessment information to enhance their provision for differentiated teaching and learning, and ensure that support is appropriately targeted towards pupils' priority learning needs.

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

The overall quality of pupils' learning in English was very good. Pupils presented as highly motivated learners who demonstrated a positive disposition towards English. They listened attentively and engaged enthusiastically and conscientiously in their learning activities.

Pupils' oral language skills were of a high standard. They expressed themselves articulately and confidently. Pupils also demonstrated a growing sense of audience, both when speaking to others and when reading aloud. In the infant and junior classes, pupils' phonological awareness was developing well, and they were acquiring a growing bank of sight words. As they progressed through the school, pupils used a broader range of reading strategies, including the effective use of contextual cues. They read a wide range of text types fluently and expressively, and their reading comprehension skills were developing very well. Older pupils were able to describe and justify their reading preferences and to support their opinions with evidence from the text.

In the infant classes, pupils were learning to form letters. While they applied themselves well to shared writing activities and transcription tasks, there was scope to further develop their emergent writing skills. Pupils' functional writing skills were of a very good standard and they were also able to list and describe the features of a range of writing genres. Pupils engaged in the writing process to plan, draft, and produce pieces of good quality. To further enhance the quality of their published writing and support the development of their individual writing styles, teachers were advised to extend their provision for the revision stage of the writing process. Overall, pupils' handwriting and presentation skills were of a high standard.

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

The overall quality of pupils' learning experiences in English was very good. Teachers had established positive learning environments that were highly conducive to learning, and their interactions with pupils were respectful and affirming. Classrooms were print-rich, and a good range of displays served both to support and to celebrate pupils' learning in English.

Pupils had access to high-quality reading materials across a variety of text types, as well as to digital resources and games. Opportunities were provided for them to share their learning with authentic audiences. They were enabled to apply their oral language skills during assemblies and school events. Senior pupils also had opportunities to share and debate their views on a broad range of school committees. Pupils shared their writing with classmates during *Author's Chair* and with a wider audience through the school's *Write a Book* initiative. Pupils' learning was also enriched by external visitors, including authors.

During the focus-group discussion, conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils shared that they enjoyed learning in English. They noted that they particularly enjoyed reading and welcomed the buddy reading initiative. Those involved were particularly proud of their leadership of the *Write a Book* project and pupils indicated that they would welcome more opportunities to engage in creative writing and publish their final drafts.

The overall quality of teaching in English was very good, with practice observed ranging from good to exemplary. Lessons, which were well structured, made provision for new learning and its application. Teachers were clear communicators and used questioning skilfully to prompt and extend pupils' thinking. They used a range of methodologies, including talk and discussion, and the explicit teaching of vocabulary and language structures to promote pupils' communicative skills. They also provided opportunities for pupils to consolidate their learning through independent and collaborative tasks. In the most effective practice, teachers made skilful use of playful pedagogies to enrich pupils' learning and provided meaningful contexts for language use. They also facilitated opportunities for pupil choice, creativity, and reflection. In some instances, lesson primarily comprised whole-class teaching and there was scope to extend provision for differentiated teaching and learning.

The quality of assessment was good. Teachers employed a suitable range of teacher-led assessment approaches including questioning, observation, commercially produced tests and standardised tests to gather information about pupils' learning. They also monitored pupils' written learning, of which they maintained samples. There was scope to use the information

generated more effectively in informing the next steps in pupils' learning and in catering for the range of ability within classes. Teachers made some provision for pupil self-assessment; they were encouraged to build on this good work by extending their provision of formative feedback and providing additional opportunities for pupils to reflect meaningfully on their learning though scaffolded self-assessment and peer-assessment.

During the evaluation, support for pupils with additional learning needs in English primarily took the form of withdrawal. The school was encouraged to review the balance of in-class and withdrawal approaches to better accommodate pupils' needs and foster greater collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers. The special education rooms were attractive, print rich and well resourced. In the lessons observed, the teachers were supportive, encouraging and promoted pupils' independence. While support plans were in place, there was scope to enhance the specificity of pupils' learning targets and align these more closely with their priority learning needs.

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

The overall quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), in progressing pupils' learning in English was very good. School leaders and teachers had engaged collaboratively and constructively in the SSE process. The school's current focus on wellbeing was reflected in the caring and respectful school atmosphere and in the promotion of pupil voice, for example through the establishment of a democratically elected student council. The school enabled and supported the student council to propose and progress initiatives, including the *Write a Book* initiative.

Arising from a previous cycle of SSE that had focused on literacy, the school had enhanced classroom libraries and introduced initiatives to support phonemic awareness, as well as foundational reading and spelling skills. As the implementation of these initiatives progressed, the school was encouraged to monitor their impact on pupils' learning.

Teachers at each class level engaged collaboratively in planning for, and implementing, the *Primary Language Curriculum*. This promoted reflective practice and helped ensure clarity and coherence in their delivery of the curriculum.

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

For the pupils of St Olaf's National School about their learning in English
Date of inspection: 25/02/2026 - 26/02/2026

Introduction

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

What did the inspectors do during the visit?

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

What did the inspectors find?

Here are some of the main things:

- Pupils were learning very well in English. They were very enthusiastic and put their best into their learning activities.
- The classrooms had lots of resources, and the children were able to share their learning with others, for example at assemblies.
- The teachers were very good at teaching the pupils.

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

- The teachers should give the pupils in the infant classes more opportunities to write by themselves. They should give the older pupils more feedback to help them improve the content of their writing.
- The teachers should use the information they have about pupils' learning to help decide what they need to learn next and how best to help them to learn.

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

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management wishes to acknowledge and welcome the very positive findings contained within this Curriculum Evaluation report in English. The Board is particularly encouraged by the recognition given to the very high quality of teaching and learning observed throughout the school and the highly positive learning experiences afforded to pupils.

The Board warmly welcomes the affirmation of the highly motivated pupils, the respectful and inclusive learning environments established within classrooms, and the wide range of opportunities provided for pupils to engage meaningfully in oral language, reading and writing activities. The recognition of initiatives such as Write a Book, buddy reading, assemblies and student leadership opportunities is especially valued.

The Board acknowledges the commitment, professionalism and collaborative work of the staff and school leadership team in maintaining such high standards in English throughout the school. The constructive recommendations outlined within the report will further support the school in its ongoing work to enhance teaching and learning and ensure the best possible outcomes for all pupils.

Area 2 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 acknowledges the recommendations outlined within the report and, in collaboration with the school leadership team and staff, is committed to supporting their ongoing implementation.

Teachers will continue to further develop pupils' writing experiences across the school. In the infant classes, there will be an increased emphasis on emergent and independent writing opportunities through playful and meaningful learning experiences. Across the senior classes, teachers will further extend opportunities for pupils to revise and improve their writing through the use of formative feedback, self-assessment and peer-assessment approaches.

The school will also continue to strengthen the use of assessment information to inform differentiated teaching and learning approaches and to ensure that support is appropriately targeted towards pupils' priority learning needs. Staff collaboration at class level and support level will continue to support consistency in planning, assessment and provision for pupils.

The Board welcomes the recommendation regarding the balance between in-class and withdrawal support and the school will continue to review and refine support practices to best accommodate pupils' needs and further strengthen collaboration between mainstream and special education teachers.

The school remains committed to ongoing school self-evaluation and to building on the many strengths identified within the report in order to further enhance pupils' learning experiences and outcomes in English.

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