An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

Curriculum Evaluation: English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile/School name	Gortanumera National School
Seoladh na scoile/School address	Ballyshrule Ballinasloe County Galway
Uimhir rolla/Roll number	08379V
Dáta na cigireachta/ Date of evaluation	28/04/2026
Dáta eisiúna na tuairisce/Date of issue of report	15/09/2026

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 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 school self-evaluation (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>
</table>

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.

Curriculum evaluation

Date of inspection	28/04/2026
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

Gortanumera National School is a co-educational primary school located in Ballyshrule, approximately five kilometres from Portumna, County Galway. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Clonfert. The school has three mainstream class teachers, one of whom is the principal. There is one special education teacher based in the school. At the time of the evaluation, there were forty pupils enrolled.

Summary of main findings and recommendations:

Findings

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English was very good.
- Overall, pupils' learning experiences were of a very high quality.
- The overall quality of teaching was very good.
- The quality of support for pupils with identified needs was very good.
- The effectiveness of school planning, including SSE, in progressing pupils' learning was good.

Recommendations

- To support the pupils' language development and comprehension skills, all teachers should develop their word walls to include more challenging words, as well as subject-specific vocabulary.
- To foster intrinsic motivation and a love of reading, all teachers should further develop their classroom libraries. Library spaces should be visually inviting and contain a range of texts to reflect pupils' interests and abilities.
- The teachers should agree a school-wide approach to assessment. This should support continuity, consistency and progression for all pupils across the strands of the *Primary Language Curriculum* (2019).

Detailed findings and recommendations

1. The quality of pupils' learning outcomes

Overall, the quality of pupils' learning in English was very good. Most pupils demonstrated high levels of enjoyment and motivation in the lessons observed. Early literacy skills, including pre-writing skills, phonological awareness and phonics, were developed effectively in the junior classes. The pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of the conventions of print. Word attack and decoding skills were incrementally developed across the school. Almost all pupils read with fluency and expression appropriate to their age and class level. Pupils applied a variety of comprehension strategies, such as visualisation, prediction and summarising, effectively. This helped their understanding of the text. The pupils who participated in the focus group reported that reading was both enjoyable and purposeful.

Pupils completed a range of writing tasks at each class level. Dictation and structured writing tasks supported accuracy, sentence construction and punctuation, particularly in the junior classes. All of the pupils enjoyed creating their own texts at an age-appropriate level. The pupils wrote across a range of genres including recount, procedural, report and narrative writing. Written work in the pupils' copybooks was generally presented to a high standard in their own chosen script. Some pupils also had opportunity to use digital technologies to present their work.

The pupils' oral language skills were well developed. Most pupils spoke confidently and willingly shared information and ideas, during their lessons and during the focus group discussion. To further enhance their speaking and listening skills, all pupils should be encouraged to explain and justify their thoughts and opinions more frequently across all curriculum areas.

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

The overall quality of the pupils' learning experiences was very good. Teachers and pupils were respectful to each other. This contributed to a calm, inclusive learning environment. The pupils who participated in the focus group discussion reported that they enjoyed learning experiences outside the classroom, for example, visiting the local library. They also spoke about buddy reading, an enjoyable and formative collaborative learning opportunity, with other classes in the school. All teachers should incorporate more collaborative learning experiences in their practice, for all strands of the *Primary Language Curriculum* (2019).

The quality of teachers' practice was very good overall. All teachers prepared very effectively for the lessons observed, with some making effective use of digital technologies to enhance teaching and learning. Lessons were well structured and appropriately paced.

All teachers demonstrated very good classroom management skills and employed a wide range of strategies to engage their pupils, including playful approaches, physical movement and station activities. A balanced mix of teacher-led discussions, small-group work, pair work and individual tasks provided stimulating and inclusive learning opportunities for all pupils. In focus group discussions, the pupils also highlighted the breadth of oral language activities in their English lessons, including discussion, hot-seating, debating and drama-based approaches.

The classroom environments were conducive to supporting pupils' learning in English. Displays that scaffolded the pupils' writing development, and showcased their work, were evident in all classrooms. Word walls displaying sight vocabulary were in use in all classes. There was scope to develop these further, however, by including subject-specific vocabulary and words that developed pupils' understanding of word structure and morphology.

Each class featured a classroom library. In some settings, these libraries served as a sensory area, allowing pupils a space to sit and read quietly while self-regulating. To foster intrinsic motivation and a love of reading, it is recommended that all teachers further develop their classroom libraries. Library spaces should be visually inviting and contain a range of texts to reflect pupils' interests and abilities. A spotlight on the genre being taught in *Writing* and *Oral language* could deepen pupils understanding across all strands of the curriculum.

The quality of support provided for pupils with identified needs was very good. Teachers had a very good understanding of their pupils' strengths and needs, which supported effective inclusion. Student Support Files reviewed during the evaluation contained comprehensive and detailed records of the interventions and actions taken to support the pupil's progress. Regular communication and effective collaboration with parents supported pupils' progress.

Teachers used several assessment approaches to monitor their pupils' progress in English. These included teacher observation, teacher-designed tasks and tests, checklists and standardised assessments. All of the teachers regularly monitored their pupils' work and, in most cases, provided timely and supportive feedback to guide next steps in their learning.

Self-assessment strategies, such as *Two Stars and a Wish*, were observed in some settings. There was scope to use self-assessment strategies more consistently across classes, to further support pupils in reflecting on their learning and in identifying next steps.

While effective practices were evident, there was, nevertheless, a need to assess learning more systematically at each class level across the strands of *Oral Language, Reading and Writing*. This should help to ensure that pupils' learning needs are clearly identified and used to inform preparation for teaching. It is recommended that teachers review their assessment approaches and agree shared practices on a school-wide basis.

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

Overall, school planning was effective in progressing pupils' learning. The whole-school plan provided guidance to teachers on the implementation of key aspects of the *Primary Language Curriculum*. In most instances, teachers' preparation for learning, teaching and assessment reflected the agreed whole-school approaches and interventions.

The school had engaged appropriately with the SSE process, focusing on Wellbeing and had developed a School Improvement Plan outlining priority actions. To strengthen the impact of this work, it is recommended that targets be reviewed to ensure they are specific, measurable and time bound. This could support more effective monitoring of progress and provide clearer evidence of improvement over time.

An Roinn Oideachais agus Óige
Department of Education and Youth

For the pupils of Gortanumera National School about their learning in English

Date of inspection: 28/04/2026

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. An 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:

- The pupils were doing very well in English.
- English lessons were enjoyable and interesting.
- Teachers were very good at teaching English.
- The school was very good at helping pupils who needed extra support in English.

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

- Teachers should develop their word walls to include more interesting words, as well as words from different subjects.
- Teachers should make their classroom libraries more inviting and provide a greater range of books for their pupils to enjoy.
- Teachers should agree a common approach to assessing how well pupils are learning in English.

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 welcomes the findings of the Inspection report which recognise the very good quality of pupils' learning, teaching practice and whole school planning in English. The report affirms the school's strong culture of collaboration among staff, the effective use of English strands and the positive learning environments that support pupil engagement and achievement . The identification of areas for further development provides a clear and constructive basis for ongoing school improvement

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 school will continue to build on current practice while addressing the recommendations outlined in the report.

- To support pupils' language development and comprehension skills , all teachers will develop more challenging word walls using subject specific vocabulary . This will support acquisition , deepen understanding of key concepts and encourage pupils use of precise and ambitious language in their oral and written work.
- Classroom Library:
- Inviting library spaces have been established in classrooms containing a wide range of texts that reflect pupils' interests , abilities and stages of development. The areas provide regular opportunities for pupils to engage with and enjoy reading in a welcoming environment.
- School-wide approach to assessment:
  Our school adopts a balanced approach to assessment and we are and will gather assessment information through observation, questioning , conferencing, self-assessment, peer assessment, portfolios and standardised testing .

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