An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation  
English

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>St. Anne's National School</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Main Street</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Tyrrellspass</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Co. Westmeath</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>05916G</td>
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Date of inspection: 09-12-2019
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 inspectors 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 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.

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 | 04-12-2019
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**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. Anne’s National School, located in Tyrrellspass, Co. Westmeath, is a co-educational school that operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. The school has six mainstream class teachers, one full-time special education teacher (SET) based in the school and one part-time SET. At the time of the evaluation, there were 149 pupils enrolled in the school.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**
- Pupils’ learning in English is of high quality.
- Pupils’ learning experiences are good overall, though there is scope to develop the pupils’ independence as learners.
- The teaching of English is commendable.
- Supports for pupils with additional needs are well organised and effective practice was observed during the evaluation; there is scope to enhance how targets are set and monitored.
- While a comprehensive whole-school plan has been developed, as yet, it does not sufficiently guide teachers’ preparation and practice.
- The principal promotes a culture of improvement and facilitates high levels of collaboration among the staff.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Teachers should provide opportunities to the pupils to engage in both independent and collaborative learning which is self-directed.
- SEN teachers should ensure that targets are more aligned to the priority learning needs of the pupils.
- Teachers’ planning should be more closely informed by whole-school planning and should specifically address the needs of the pupils in their classes.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The pupils’ learning in English is of high quality. Pupils are motivated to learn and apply themselves enthusiastically to their tasks. Teachers foster a positive learning atmosphere and supportive interactions were observed among pupils and between pupils and teachers. During a focus-group discussion, the pupils expressed their enjoyment of English and described their lessons as fun.

Pupils in all classes have opportunities to engage in talk and discussion and share their ideas with their classmates. They can summarise and prioritise ideas, and justify personal likes and dislikes. *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* is used well to support the pupils’ communication and social skills in a cooperative setting. This good work could be further enhanced by explicitly teaching the target language. Pupils in some classes recite a variety of rhymes and poems with appropriate expression. However, there is potential to extend their engagement with poetry and to provide a wider repertoire of poetry at each class level. A whole-school approach to the selection and recitation of poetry at each class level will be useful in this regard.

Pupils’ achievements in reading are good with many confidently reading at their own instructional level and applying comprehension strategies independently. They have access to a wide range of reading materials, including audiobooks, and they read for pleasure and interest. The school implements a range of activities and initiatives to develop and encourage reading. Well-developed models of support such as *Literacy Lift-Off* and *Reader’s Theatre* are well established in the school to develop pupils’ reading skills.

Overall, pupils write competently in a variety of genres and engage in the writing process. They write for a variety of audiences and purposes. Pupils demonstrate an appropriate use of grammar, spelling and punctuation in their writing tasks. While pupils’ handwriting skills are developed systematically across the school, there is still some variation in the pupils’ presentation of work. The agreed whole-school approach to handwriting should be implemented consistently across the school.

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

Pupils’ learning experiences in English are good. Teachers provide high quality experiences for learners which include drama, play, word study and modelling of the reading process. Pupils engage in shared reading activities and in personal reading. To further extend these rich learner experiences, pupils should be afforded more purposeful opportunities to engage in independent and collaborative learning which is self-directed.

The quality of teaching is of a high standard. Classroom environments are interesting and interactive places where pupil participation is prioritised. Teachers provide a wide range of resources to consolidate the pupils’ literacy skills. The teachers are clear communicators and deliver well-structured and suitably paced lessons. While all teachers prepare individual planning it has scope to more specifically address the needs of the pupils in their classes. Teachers should carefully plan and differentiate the learning objectives to cater for the range of pupils’ abilities and specific needs in their class. They are also advised to reduce the use of commercial programmes for planning and delivery of lessons.
The overall quality of assessment is good. The school uses standardised and diagnostic testing to identify pupils for supplementary support teaching in English. Commendably, pupil self-assessment is a feature of practice evolving in all classes. All data should be analysed more rigorously in order to plan interventions and challenge pupils more specifically. Pupils’ work is closely corrected and monitored by teachers. Best practice included individual feedback to pupils and this should be a more consistent feature across the school.

The quality of support for pupils with additional learning needs is good. All supports are very well planned and organised and the continuum of support is implemented. The school is responsive to pupils’ needs and implements various supports including team-teaching. Teachers use a range of diagnostic assessments to identify the priority learning needs of the pupils and in the best instances, these directly inform the pupils’ learning targets and individualised programmes. However, this practice is not uniform. All SEN teachers should ensure that learning targets are more closely aligned to the identified learning needs of the pupils and are specific, measurable and time-bound.

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

Overall, there is good whole-school planning for English. A comprehensive whole-school plan has been collaboratively developed. As yet, it does not sufficiently guide individual teachers’ preparation and practice. Teachers should ensure that the agreed whole-school plan for English guides all aspects of teachers’ planning and work in their classrooms.

The principal promotes a culture of improvement and facilitates high levels of collaboration among the staff. Teachers engage regularly in ongoing continuous professional development and opportunities are afforded for teachers to share their expertise with colleagues across the school.

The school has engaged positively with the school self-evaluation process (SSE) and its current focus is on digital literacy. There is scope for the school to further refine the targets set to ensure that they are more learning focused.
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.

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<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<tr>
<td>Very Good</td>
<td><strong>Very good</strong> 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 <strong>outstanding</strong> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision.</td>
<td>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</td>
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<td>Good</td>
<td><strong>Good</strong> 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 <strong>very good</strong> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
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<td>Satisfactory</td>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas</td>
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<td>Fair</td>
<td><strong>Fair</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils’ learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve</td>
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<td>Weak</td>
<td><strong>Weak</strong> 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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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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 of St. Anne’s N.S. welcomes the positive findings of this recent evaluation.

We are very pleased that the high quality of pupils’ learning in English and the high quality of teaching is acknowledged.

We are particularly proud that our classrooms were described as interesting, interactive places and how pupils described their lessons as fun. We feel this reflects the hard work and dedication of the staff.

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 and staff of St. Anne’s N.S., acknowledge the recommendations outlined in the report and endeavour to address them as follows;

- More opportunities will be provided for pupils to engage in independent and collaborative, self-directed learning. This will be afforded by building on our use of systematic approaches outlined in Primary Language Curriculum Support Materials e.g. “The Writing Workshop” and Free Writing.
- Following recent review of pupil support plans by the SEN Team, clear SMART learning targets have been adjusted to meet the priority learning needs of the pupils.
- Teachers are working to ensure that their planning and preparation is more closely informed by Our Whole School English Plan and will address the specific needs of the pupils in their classes.