An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

Curriculum Evaluation  
History  
REPORT  

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Dookinella National School</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Dookinella, Achill Sound  
                                 | Westport, County Mayo |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 14873P |

Date of inspection: 07-03-2018
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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in History 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.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection  07-03-2018

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
Dookinella National School is a rural co-educational school located on Achill Island in County Mayo in the village of Dookinella. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. There are two mainstream teachers in this school. At the time of the evaluation, there were twenty-eight pupils enrolled. Enrolments across the island have been declining in recent years. The school participates in the School Support Programme of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The quality of pupils’ learning in History is very good; pupils demonstrate a high degree of understanding of local history.
• Pupils’ learning experiences are of a high standard; more opportunities to use information and communications technology (ICT) to record and present pupils’ learning in History would further enhance this provision.
• The overall quality of teaching in the subject is commendable with some very effective elements of practice noted.
• Pupils record their written work neatly in copybooks and folders; there is scope for extending their responses in a more creative fashion.
• The school plan for History is of a very high quality and a cyclical programme of work for each class level has been developed.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• ICT should be used more effectively to enhance the learning experiences of pupils in History, and pupils should be provided with opportunities to respond more creatively to lesson material.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
Pupils’ learning in History is of a very high standard. Their enjoyment in learning is very evident during lessons and they are highly motivated. During the focus-group discussion, pupils spoke very positively about their history lessons. They value the use of novels and the opportunity to undertake trips of historical interest to stimulate their interest. In the junior classes, story is used very effectively to enable pupils to develop a very good understanding of time and chronology. Pupils in the senior classes demonstrate a very good understanding of local history and an awareness of historical issues such as emigration and the impact it has had on the life of the people of the island.
2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The overall quality of the support for pupils’ learning is commendable with some exemplary practice observed. Pupils’ learning experiences are of a high standard. Stimulating learning environments are provided and timelines and historical artefacts are used appropriately to promote pupils’ learning. Pupils are enabled to work collaboratively on projects and to present their work to others.

The quality of teaching in the subject is good overall, with some very effective practice observed. A very worthwhile integrated approach is adopted which allows pupils to develop and consolidate their learning across a broad range of experiences in History. Pupils are enabled to use the required vocabulary correctly. Lessons are paced and structured appropriately. Appropriately, teachers share the intended learning outcome as the start of the lesson and check for its achievement at the end. Pupils record their work neatly in copybooks and folders. Written work in History is mostly confined to the completion of functional writing tasks. Extending opportunities for pupils to respond more creatively to lesson material is advised and the school should explore opportunities to further develop digital technologies effectively as a learning tool. This should include enabling pupils to use ICT to find, record, evaluate and communicate information on relevant historical topics.

The quality of assessment in the subject is good. Teachers use a good range of questioning techniques to monitor pupils’ understanding during lessons. Mind-mapping is used very effectively as a technique to enable pupils to record their learning. Pupils are encouraged to reflect on their learning and to engage in self-assessment. While a variety of strategies is used to assess pupils’ learning, there is a need to develop a more consistent whole-school approach to the recording of pupils’ progress in History.

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

The quality of the school plan for History is of a very high standard. The plan is contextualised to the needs of this multi-grade setting and provides a very clear outline of the topics to be covered in a cyclical fashion. Individual teachers’ planning is reflective of this good practice. Collectively, teachers agree and implement whole-school approaches to teaching and learning in the subject.

The school has engaged effectively in the school self-evaluation process to enhance teaching and learning in literacy and numeracy. The school plans to review its provision for History as the next stage in this process.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed near the main door of the school.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy in place.
4. The principal confirmed that all teachers have been made aware that they are mandated persons and that they have responsibilities in that regard.

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

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The board of management of Dookinella N.S. warmly welcomes the findings of this very positive curriculum evaluation. We are very pleased that the motivation, enjoyment in learning and positive attitude of our pupils have been recognised. The board also appreciates the recognition and praise in the report regarding the very high standards of teaching in our school highlighted by:

- the very high standard of our pupils’ learning in History
- the commendable quality of teachers’ practice and the recognition of some exemplary teachers’ practice observed during the evaluation
- the very high standard of the school plan that is contextualised to the needs of our multi-grade context

Part B   Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The report’s recommendations will be implemented with immediate effect. Following a board of management meeting and a staff meeting the following action plan has been formulated to address the recommendations contained in the report:

- The school has outlined strategies to further develop digital technologies effectively to find, record, evaluate and communicate information on relevant historical topics.
- A consistent whole-school approach to the recording of pupils’ progress in History has been developed following a review of our current assessment practices.
Inspection of 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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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</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>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.</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>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.</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>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.</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>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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