Curriculum Evaluation

History

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Killavullen N S</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Killavullen</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Mallow</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Co Cork</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>15903D</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of inspection: 28-03-2018
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 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 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 | 28-03-2018
--- | ---

**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**
Killavullen N.S. is a co-educational school which operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne. Teaching staff comprise of five mainstream teachers, two fulltime special education teachers and one part-time special education teacher. At the time of the evaluation, 142 pupils were enrolled in the school.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**
- The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good and pupils derive great enjoyment from their engagement in drama as a means of enriching their understanding of complex historical events.
- The quality of pupils learning experiences is highly commendable; their engagement with local history has made a most valuable contribution to their knowledge and appreciation of their rich local heritage.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall; further development of assessment approaches would enhance practice.
- Information and communications technology is skilfully used in all settings as a teaching tool; scope to expand its potential as a tool for learning in History should be explored across the school.
- The quality of school planning, including school self-evaluation is commendable; as a community of practitioners, teachers continuously engage in piloting of and reflecting on progressive, productive approaches to teaching and learning.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- The school should reflect on current assessment methods and should refine these in order to develop a cohesive approach to assessment conducive to establishing pupils’ attainment of and progression in, specific historical skills.
- Further opportunities for pupils’ to apply their investigative skills to online platforms should be explored, in tandem with the development of the specific skill-set required to interpret digital text in History.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning in History is very good overall. Pupils are highly motivated learners and they have a very strong sense of their own local, national and European identity as a result of their History endeavours. Pupils set high expectations for themselves in their learning of History and they are confident in their potential to achieve these expectations. In the pupil focus group interview conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils articulated their understanding of what it means to work as an historian. They competently recalled and connected aspects of the local, national and international History they have studied. These pupils also highlighted their delight with opportunities provided to them to engage in role-play and drama when learning about History. In classroom interactions, pupils demonstrated a very good understanding of concepts such as time and chronology and change and continuity.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
Overall, the quality of pupils’ learning experiences is highly commendable and the quality of teaching is very good. Pupils’ learning in History is very well supported through the learning experiences provided to them. The school environment promotes an appreciation of History. Pupils have hands-on access, both in lessons and in the school environment, to a rich range of intriguing artefacts. A time capsule, developed with a previous generation of pupils, continues to be used as a reference point by current pupils. Its central location in the school environment positively impacts pupils’ awareness of the importance of preserving the past. In junior classes, use of timelines is linked with photographs and printed text. This enables pupils to sequence, compare, discuss and explore personal events in their own lives. Furthermore, a class timeline of monthly events, complemented by photographs, is valuably contributing to junior pupils’ conceptual understanding of the passage of time. Pupils learning experiences in History are enhanced by the judicious and relevant use of audio, video, photographs and slideshows. Further opportunities for pupils to apply their investigative skills to online platforms should be explored, in tandem, with development of the specific skill-set required to interpret digital text. Highly commendable links have been developed with the local area. Pupils’ learning experiences have made a most unique contribution to their understanding and appreciation of their rich local heritage.

All teachers present detailed short-term planning documents which outline the key methodologies being employed in lessons. Monthly records of learning indicate the content areas covered as well as the intended learning outcomes. Teachers prepare comprehensively for lessons and select resources that captivate pupils’ interests and capitalise their natural curiosities. The use of drama as a methodology to engage learners and to enable them to appreciate complex historical events and unique perspectives of characters is highly commended. A rich register of both subject-specific language and topic-specific language was used by the pupils in lessons. This topic specific vocabulary was effectively developed through the provision of print-rich resources, bespoke flashcards and graphic representation of their current knowledge. Teachers optimised pupils’ comprehension and subsequent use of this language through the organisation of highly communicative, collaborative learning tasks. Learning was most effectively facilitated when pupils were given appropriate autonomy to engage with resources and tasks. ICT is used to very good effect in many settings as a teaching tool. During the evaluation, it was used skilfully to provide graphics that junior pupils could analyse and in middle and senior classes, pupils had opportunities to interrogate historical video
footage. Pupils in the senior classes are commendably provided with links to appropriate historical resources through their online accounts. The extension and further development of these good practices would further enhance learning experiences provided for pupils.

A range of assessment approaches is currently in use across the school. In some settings, teacher-designed tests, quizzes and work samples indicate the topic-specific knowledge acquired by pupils. Use of formal reflective learning tasks, in some settings, is enabling pupils to reflect on their own learning achievements. The school should now reflect on the assessment methods currently in use and refine these in order to develop a more cohesive approach to assessment, conducive to establishing pupils’ attainment of and progression in specific historical skills.

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

The quality of whole-school planning for History is commendable. The plan is contextualised to the needs of the school and provides a broad and balanced History curriculum. Teacher expertise in local History and the schools’ focus on hands-on learning experiences is leading to commendable gains in the schools’ goal to become less reliant on commercial programmes and text-book matter. During lessons observed, this approach promoted an organic, active and meaningful experience for learners. Teachers are a highly engaged community of practitioners and conscientiously trial and reflect on approaches to planning and teaching. One teacher is currently piloting a new Cuntas Míosúil (monthly progress record) format while another member of the teaching staff is engaged in classroom-based research on ways to authentically affirm pupil voice. The school has formally actively re-engaged with school self-evaluation process.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Very Good</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Good</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Satisfactory</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Fair</strong></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>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Weak</strong></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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
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 Killavullen National School welcome the affirmation and acknowledgement of our staff in providing highly commendable learning experiences for the children in our care. This report instils a sense of pride in our commitment to our vocation. We agree that one of the most pleasing aspects of the findings was the quality of pupils’ learning – the children’s delight at opportunities afforded them and the high expectations they set for themselves; a result, we feel, of the culture we strive to create and promote.

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 Staff have reflected on the report at a recent Staff Meeting and have looked at

(a) refining their assessment methods, developing a more cohesive approach and

(b) providing further opportunities for pupils to apply their investigative skills to online platforms.

Actions/plans to address these are outlined below.

Cohesive Approach to Assessment

- Staff will reflect on areas for development within History and, at a Staff Meeting on Whole-School Planning in June, will agree to incorporate nine areas for assessment (three per term) into our Cuntasí Míosúla for the coming academic year.
- We will assess children’s History skills development by incorporating a teacher observation checklist (using the same assessment ticks method as we use in Mata sa Rang).
- This will be trialled in the pilot Cuntas Míosúil for May and June with implementation across the whole school from next Sept.
- Learning Outcomes for the chosen areas will be front-loaded with the skill chosen for assessment. (Skills: Time and Chronology, Change and Continuity, Cause and Effect, Using Evidence, Synthesis and Communication, Empathy).

Increasing Opportunities to Apply Investigative skills to Online Platforms

(including development of Specific Skill-sets required to interpret digital text in History)

- Greater ICT for pupils as a learning tool
  - enlarging photos with a visualiser
  - Britannia/Ducksters/Scoilnet/BBC for researching topics on iPads.
  - Develop pupil research skills with the use of sites, such as Britannia
- Stepping back and letting children be more in control of their own learning (WALT/WILF/Project Work/allowing children to research during a lesson)
- Providing children with sources of websites used.
- Give children a focus question prior to observing historical videos clips.
- Lesson to be included in senior end on Bias/Alternative points of view/Propaganda
- Interpreting digital text in History - deciding themselves whether it’s bias and considering the source.