

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation

English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Star of the Sea
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Sandymount Dublin 4
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	15995L

Date of inspection: 06-03-2018



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agus Scileanna
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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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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	06-03-2018
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Located in an urban area, Star of the Sea National School is under Catholic patronage and caters for boys from junior infants to sixth class. At the time of the evaluation, the teaching staff comprised fourteen mainstream class teachers, five special education teachers and an administrative principal.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The teaching of English is of a high standard, with some exceptionally high quality lessons which focus on pupils' skill development and higher-order independent learning skills.
- There is an overall openness on the part of teachers to school self-evaluation (SSE) and this is impacting positively on pupils' literacy achievements; there is scope for strengthening the implementation and monitoring steps of the SSE cycle.
- Overall pupil learning and achievement levels in English are commendable, with very high levels of interest, motivation and enjoyment evident in most settings; the positive benefits of the school focus on early intervention and prevention are clearly evident in pupils' learning.
- There are some effective assessment practices in the school; there is scope for more consistent implementation of an agreed range of assessment practices.
- The quality of leadership and management is highly commended; a culture of collaboration and co-operation in pursuit of excellence in learning is actively promoted.
- In the planning undertaken by a number of teachers, the pupils' independent learning skills and agency are to the fore; there is a need to ensure that this is the case in all teachers' planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- It is recommended that the agreed initiatives to improve and support pupils' learning in English be implemented consistently at each class level and that their impact be systematically monitored.
- There is a need to ensure the implementation of an agreed whole-school approach to assessment that includes the following components: teachers' formative written feedback, pupils' self-assessment, use of assessment information to inform teaching and learning and provision for the varying abilities of pupils including the very able.
- It is recommended that the pupils' independent learning skills and agency be promoted on a daily basis and reflected in teachers' planning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

Overall pupil learning and achievement levels in English are commendable, with very high levels of interest, motivation and enjoyment evident in most settings. Pupils use subject specific oral language adeptly and show a very good ability to verbally initiate and recall topics. In the senior classes, pupils can generally hypothesise verbally and analyse and debate issues orally with ease, fluency and competence. Through *Aistear*, pupils in infant classes are benefitting from a multi-faceted English language curriculum that supports the integrated development of their oral language, early reading and emergent writing skills as well as their creative expression.

Pupils generally achieve high standards in reading. Pupils' emergent writing skills in the junior classes are of a very good standard. As they progress through the school, pupils experience a varied writing curriculum with some excellent pupil writing in a variety of genres evident, including high quality poetry, research reports, and a recipe book.

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

The experiences provided to support pupils' learning in English are effective, with several teachers facilitating integrated language learning opportunities for children in which pupil self-expression and creativity through oral and written language are skilfully promoted. In a small number of learning settings, teachers need to provide increased opportunities for pupils to develop their independent learning skills and to make decisions about their learning.

Overall, pupils with additional learning needs in English receive effective support, encouragement and positive feedback on their efforts and achievements.

The teaching of English is of a high standard, with some exceptionally high quality lessons which focus on pupils' skill development and higher-order independent learning skills. In a small number of classrooms, pupil engagement with poems and rhymes is limited and a more systematic approach to ensuring that all experience a core repertoire of poems and/or rhymes is required. Information and communication technologies are used to very good effect to support pupils' learning in English.

Early literacy and early intervention strategies in the area of English are very effective and the school focus on early intervention and prevention is impacting positively on pupils' learning. It is recommended that the whole-school agreed initiatives to improve and support pupils' learning in English be implemented consistently at each class level and that their impact be systematically monitored. In this regard, there is a need for greater clarity regarding expectations and benchmarks for each class level in order to support the consistent implementation of the agreed whole-school initiatives.

There are some effective assessment practices evident in a number of classrooms; such practices include pupils' own reflection on and evaluation of their work, some peer assessment and some formative assessment by teachers. There is a need to ensure the implementation of an agreed whole-school approach to assessment that includes the following components: teachers'

formative written feedback, pupils' self-assessment, use of assessment information to inform teaching and learning and provision for the varying abilities of pupils including the very able.

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

School planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE), is very effective. There is an overall openness on the part of the teachers to SSE and this is impacting positively on pupils' literacy achievements. There is scope for strengthening the implementation and monitoring steps of the SSE cycle to ensure consistently high practice, successful learning outcomes, and appropriate learning experiences for all pupils. In the planning undertaken by a number of teachers, the pupils' independent learning skills and agency are to the fore; there is a need to ensure that this is the case in all teachers' planning. The school's engagement with SSE to date indicates a professional readiness amongst staff for the incorporation of systematic professional collaborative review and feedback into SSE processes.

The quality of leadership and management is highly commended. A culture of collaboration and co-operation in pursuit of excellence in learning is actively promoted.

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 / in the school's reception area.
3. The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

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

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	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	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.	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
Good	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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	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.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;