An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

Curriculum Evaluation  
English  

REPORT  

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Saint Joseph’s National School</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Killenummery  
Dromahair  
County Leitrim |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 16130C |

Date of inspection: 09-05-2019
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 inspector 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, 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

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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to principal and teachers |

• Discussion with principal and teachers  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Pupil focus-group interview

SCHOOL CONTEXT
St. Joseph’s National School is a rural, co-educational school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Ardagh and Clonmacnoise. The school caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class and there were fifty-four pupils enrolled at the time of the inspection. The school has three mainstream class teachers and one part-time special education teacher based in the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good; pupils express their opinions confidently and competently.
• The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in English is very good; pupils are provided with purposeful collaborative learning opportunities.
• Teaching is of a very good quality; teachers’ collaborative practice is a particular strength of the school.
• The overall quality of support for pupils with additional needs is very good; target setting in Continuum of Support plans is not sufficiently specific and measurable.
• The overall quality of assessment is very good; pupils are exposed to a wide range of assessment strategies.
• The overall quality of school planning including school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good; previous school improvement plans continue to impact very positively on pupils’ learning outcomes in English.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Teachers’ should ensure that targets in Continuum of Support planning are more specific and measurable in order to track pupil progress.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The overall quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good. Pupils enjoy their learning and are highly motivated to learn. A very positive learning atmosphere prevails in which pupils listen very well to their teacher and to each other. During the focus group discussion, pupils spoke articulately and were able to express their opinions confidently and competently. They were able to describe
how their literacy skills have been developed systematically throughout the school and how they enjoy using digital learning technologies (DLT) for research and recording of their learning.

During the evaluation, pupils used coherent sentences which included topic and subject-specific language. They were able to use language audibly, clearly and with confidence. Their ability to demonstrate understanding, justify and argue a point of view was noteworthy. The middle and senior classes demonstrated a thorough understanding of the techniques of poetry through discussion and composition of poetry and all classes could recite a variety of rhymes and poems with expression.

Pupils demonstrate a positive attitude to reading and are exposed to a wide variety of texts. The pupils can read with fluency and can use a variety of comprehension strategies across a range of texts and genres. Writing skills are of a very good standard; pupils purposefully engage in the writing process and the presentation of written work is consistently good in all settings. The explicit teaching of the writing genre is impacting positively on pupils’ writing outcomes. The use of DLT for the publication of pupil composed books positively enhances the writing process. In some cases the editing and redrafting of pupils’ work would further enhance the writing process. Evidence from a range of whole-school assessment data indicates that pupils are making very good progress in their learning.

Pupils’ early literacy skills are very competently developed. The use of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is impacting very positively on the development of pupils’ oral language skills. The pupils can discuss their learning using appropriate sequencing, tenses and subject specific vocabulary to a very high standard. Some teachers have included planning of subject specific vocabulary in their short-term planning, this very good practice should be shared to enhance language learning. Pupils’ early writing skills are being very effectively developed through station teaching.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The overall quality of pupils’ learning experiences in English is very good. Pupils are provided with purposeful opportunities to engage in collaborative learning. They have opportunities to use and apply the skills of the subject during lessons in English. The pupils experience challenging vocabulary and sentence structure from the teacher and quality oral language activities through the specific teaching of the spoken text types. Pupils have opportunities to illustrate their learning to a variety of audiences. Pupils are exposed to a wide range of initiatives with the specific purpose of enhancing oral language. Teacher questioning is very effective in challenging pupils’ thinking and eliciting good quality pupil responses. The learning environments are stimulating, print-rich and attractive spaces which celebrate pupils’ learning. Highly respectful interactions were observed between pupils and pupils and teachers.

Teaching is of a very good quality with all teachers demonstrating highly effective classroom management skills. Lessons observed were well structured and a suitable range of effective methodologies was employed. Teachers prepare learning environments that promote an appreciation of English. Teachers’ planning and preparation facilitates effective practice for teaching and learning. Digital learning technologies are used by teachers to support pupils’ learning. Pupils reported how they enjoyed the literacy initiatives which were promoted in the school by their
teachers. During the evaluation very good integration of oral, reading and writing activities were observed. Teachers share their expertise in the subject with other teachers appropriately.

The quality of support for pupils with additional needs is very good overall. The school provides additional support teaching through a suitable range of in-class and withdrawal approaches. The quality of planning for pupils with special educational needs is good overall. The Continuum of Support has been consistently implemented throughout the school; however, there is a need to ensure that clear, measurable learning targets that are contextualised to pupils’ learning needs are consistently used in support planning.

The overall quality of assessment is very good. A variety of assessment of learning and assessment for learning strategies is used to assess pupils’ work and to plan for pupils’ future learning in English. Pupils are enabled to reflect constructively, assess their own learning and record key facts acquired. All teachers shared the learning intentions with the pupils at the beginning of the lessons. All teachers have assessment files and track pupils’ progress. Assessment data should be further analysed to ensure that programmes of learning are sufficiently differentiated to support and challenge pupils appropriately.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of school planning, including SSE, is very effective in progressing pupils’ learning. The principal is very effective in her curriculum leadership role for English. She promotes a culture of improvement and builds capacity within the school. The whole school plan for English has been identified for review in line with the Primary Language Curriculum and elements of the plan have been updated using the school self-evaluation process. The current school improvement plan has identified local history with a particular focus on the language associated with the area. This has ensured continuity in oral language from previous school improvement plans. A whole-school approach to handwriting has been implemented and it facilitates the development of a cursive script in accordance with the Primary Language Curriculum. These initiatives continue to impact very positively on pupils’ learning outcomes in English.
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 would like to congratulate the pupils, teachers and parents on the very positive findings contained in this report. We are delighted that the school’s strengths have been highlighted and that the report acknowledges the very high standards of teaching and learning being achieved in English. We warmly welcome the praise given to the commitment and dedication of the principal and staff in creating a culture of collaborative practice and in the quality of planning, including SSE, which continues to impact very positively on pupils learning outcomes. We echo the praise given to the school on the very high quality of assessment and support for pupils with additional needs. We are committed to embedding in practice the recommendation made.

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 Board of Management acknowledges and accepts the recommendation made in the Curriculum Evaluation report. Together, the Board of Management and staff are committed to the implementation of the recommendation. Support has been sought from the NCSE Support Service to provide assistance with more specific and measurable target setting in the Continuum of Support Planning.
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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<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 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><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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