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>St Brigid’s Girls N S</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | The Park  
|                               | Cabinteely  
|                               | Dublin 18  |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 16353W |

Date of inspection: 21-09-2017
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.
## Curriculum Evaluation

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| **Inspection activities undertaken** | Observation of teaching and learning  
• Discussion with principal and teachers  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Pupil focus-group interview  
• Feedback to principal and teachers |

### SCHOOL CONTEXT
St. Brigid’s National School is an urban primary school catering for 550 girls from junior infants to sixth class. The school is under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Dublin.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS
- Pupils’ learning achievements in English are good.
- While the whole-school approach to teaching specific writing genres is commended, pupils’ confidence and competence in writing requires further development.
- The overall quality of teaching in mainstream and support settings is very good.
- For the most part, teachers use a valuable range of assessment strategies to evaluate pupils’ progress, although further analysis and use of the data gathered is required.
- The whole-school plan for English provides very good guidance to teachers.
- Prior to the national industrial action, the school had identified specific areas for improvement using the school self-evaluation process.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS
- More explicit focus should be placed on challenging the pupils to apply the language and skills taught to their written work.
- Assessment data should be analysed more rigorously by all teachers, to ensure that programmes of learning are sufficiently differentiated to support and challenge pupils appropriately.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. **THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING**

The quality of pupils’ learning in English is good. During the focus group discussion with pupils, conducted as part of the evaluation, most pupils spoke positively about how they enjoy English. Pupils engage enthusiastically and are motivated to learn.
Pupils’ early literacy skills are developed competently. The introduction of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* and *the New Primary Language Curriculum* in the infant classes to support the development of pupils’ oral skills is praiseworthy. Further embedding of the programmes and analysis of pupils’ oral skills is advised. Pupils can recite a variety of rhymes and poems. Good attention is given to developing pupils’ vocabulary throughout the school. Most pupils read with confidence, age-appropriate fluency and understanding. The whole-school approach to teaching specific writing genres is commended. Pupils’ confidence and competence in writing requires further development. More explicit focus should be placed on challenging the pupils to apply the specific language and skills to their written work. More meaningful discussion about their work and emphasis on peer review and the revision stage of writing would benefit pupils’ written work.

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

The school supports pupils’ learning in English effectively. Learning environments are print rich and celebrate pupils’ work. Pupils are afforded opportunities to engage in a good range of learning experiences, including collaborative work, shared reading activities, book clubs and personal reading. Commendably, visits to the theatre, local libraries and workshops by storytellers are arranged to enhance pupils’ learning experiences. The extension of learning experiences to include more opportunities for pupils to engage purposefully with the views of others and to reflect on their own learning is advised.

The overall quality of teaching in mainstream and support settings is of a very high quality. During the evaluation the quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. In the best instances, teaching was based on clear learning outcomes, lessons were very well structured, there was explicit focus on vocabulary development and a variety of teaching methodologies was used very effectively. These positive practices should be embedded in all learning settings. Teachers work collaboratively and openly share expertise. In line with the school improvement plan, teachers are implementing whole-school approaches to the teaching of genre writing. To further progress this work, all teachers should fully implement all stages of the writing process, place more emphasis on modelling writing for the pupils and challenge the pupils to apply the language associated with the specific genres in their written work.

The recent introduction of the *Continuum of Support* at whole-school level is commended. Support plans for pupils with additional educational needs at all levels of the continuum are in place. Targets for each pupil at each level of the continuum of support should be further developed, to provide for the full range of learning needs including learning targets for pupils with English as an additional language. School support teaching is mostly provided by withdrawing pupils. The model of support in English should be further developed to include more in-class support to cater more specifically for the range of learning needs in the school.

The overall quality of assessment is good. There is a whole-school approach to analysing standardised tests and tracking pupils’ progress. The history of support given to pupils is documented and available for all teachers. Copybooks are well monitored with some very good examples of formative feedback. An agreed whole-school incremental approach to the monitoring, correction and feedback of pupils’ written work should be further developed. All teachers have assessment files and are collecting valuable data on pupils’ progress. Assessment data should be
analysed more rigorously by all teachers, 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 is very good. The whole-school plan provides clear guidance to teachers on delivering the English programme to all classes. In order to fully achieve continuity and progression throughout the school, every teacher should consistently implement the whole-school English plan. Resources are managed very well. A very effective incremental whole-school approach to handwriting is in place that facilitates the development of a cursive script.

The school reported that it is not currently engaging in the school self-evaluation process due to industrial action. Prior to this, an evaluation of English in the school was undertaken and the school devised a comprehensive school improvement plan.

4. CHILD PROTECTION

The following aspects of the Child Protection Procedures for Primary and Post Primary Schools were checked during the evaluation:

1. Teachers' access to a copy of the school’s Child Protection policy
2. The prominent display of the name of Designated Liaison Person near the main entrance

The school was fully compliant with both aspects.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

We are very happy that recognition was accorded to the high quality of English teaching in our school, to the comprehensive School Plan in English which guides that teaching, and to the rich learning opportunities provided to our pupils both within the school environment and outside of the school setting, which have ensured the competent and confident reading and comprehension skills as evidenced by most of our pupils. We are pleased that our commitment to initiatives such as Aistear, the New Language Curriculum and the new Learning Support Guidelines was acknowledged – the introduction of which takes place after collaborative reflection on, and evaluation of, existing practices.

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

In accordance with the recommendations of the report, we look forward to complementing our school plan in writing genres by enabling our pupils to embed more thoroughly the language specific to those genres in their writing. To that end teacher discussions have clarified/identified the use of assessment for learning strategies focussing on metacognition within a writing process which is framed by a gradual release of responsibility. As the report commends the rich assessment data collected by our teachers, we acknowledge the concurrent recommendation to employ that data to challenge pupils appropriately and to frame differentiated targets for pupils across the Continuum of Support. This process has commenced organically as teachers have acquired increased knowledge of their pupils' needs since the date of inspection. Collaboration among teachers across all settings has occurred to identify how to best respond to those needs.
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><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>
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<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 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><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>
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<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>
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<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>
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