

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Curriculum Evaluation**

**English**

**REPORT**

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <b>Ainm na scoile /<br/>School name</b>       | Loch Mór Maigh National School              |
| <b>Seoladh na scoile /<br/>School address</b> | Loughmore<br>Templemore<br>County Tipperary |
| <b>Uimhir rolla /<br/>Roll number</b>         | 16933R                                      |

**Date of inspection: 22-01-2020**



---

**An Roinn Oideachais  
agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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.

## **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

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <b>Dates of inspection</b>              | 21-01-2020 and 22-01-2020  |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal, literacy co-ordinator and special educational needs co-ordinator</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul> |

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Loch Mór Maigh National School, located in Loughmore, County Tipperary, operates under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Cashel and Emly. The staff comprises a teaching principal, four mainstream class teachers and three special education teachers (SETs), one of whom is shared with a school in the area. There are two classes for pupils with autistic spectrum disorders (ASDs). The current enrolment is eighty-nine pupils.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The school principal, with the support of school staff, has established a very welcoming, inclusive and positive school climate.
- Learner outcomes in English are good; there is scope to further develop pupils' competence and confidence in oral language.
- The quality of pupils' learner experiences is good.
- Overall, the teaching observed was good; there is need for more consistent implementation of agreed approaches to literacy.
- Whole-school planning for English, including school self-evaluation (SSE) is good; the current targets in the school improvement plan are not sufficiently aligned with the identified focus on oral-language development.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- Teachers should provide more regular opportunities for pupils to present, explain and discuss their learning.
- Approaches to developing pupils' literacy skills should be implemented consistently at a whole-school level.
- Assessment data should be used more effectively in the setting and monitoring of schoolimprovement targets for oral language.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

#### 1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The overall quality of pupils' learner outcomes in English is good. During the evaluation, the majority of pupils were observed to be enjoying their learning and they presented as motivated to learn. Pupils' phonological and word-attack skills are developed effectively. Most pupils read with age-appropriate fluency and expression and have opportunities to explore differentiated texts. The investment by the board of management in reading resources is highly commendable.

While pupils could discuss some comprehension strategies, there is scope to develop their higher-order comprehension skills. Agreed whole-school approaches to the progressive development of comprehension skills should be implemented consistently. Pupils in some classes can recite a range of poetry with enthusiasm and expression. However, opportunities for pupils to explore and recite poetry in a variety of genres should be extended, particularly in the middle and senior classes.

In a minority of classes, pupils displayed very good competence in explaining, justifying and offering their opinions across a range of topics. There was scope, however, to improve the range of oral-language skills of the majority of pupils. Commendably, this area has already been targeted through the SSE process. Going forward, the pupils should be provided with more regular opportunities to present, discuss and explain their learning during all lessons. Oral literacy was fostered very effectively during the lessons observed in the classes for pupils with ASDs.

Good-quality samples of pupils' writing in a range of genres are displayed in some classrooms and on corridors. However, the pupils' copybooks in middle and senior classes indicate an overemphasis on answering comprehension questions. During their focus-group discussion, pupils reported that they enjoy creating their own stories, debating and presenting their project work to their peers. They would welcome more opportunities to engage in a wider variety of writing activities during lessons. All pupils should be provided with opportunities to engage in a broader range of writing tasks.

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

Pupils' learner experiences in English are good. In the majority of lessons observed, pupils were engaged in meaningful and appropriately challenging activities. Pupils had regular opportunities to engage in learning collaboratively. Implementation of *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* in the junior classes provides opportunities for pupils to develop their literacy skills through play. The school should use in-class support to enhance the impact of this important work.

The overall quality of the teaching observed was good. Teachers prepared effectively for lessons. A range of methodologies was used. Where practice was highly effective, teacher questioning was used to stimulate high-quality pupil-led discussion. The writing process is taught systematically in the majority of classrooms. Building on this good practice, agreed strategies in relation to the teaching of the writing genres should be implemented consistently. Closer links should be established between writing and oral genres. Commendably, teachers' engagement with the *Primary Language Curriculum* is reflected in individual planning. Going forward, teachers should prepare their short-term planning on a fortnightly basis.

The overall quality of assessment is good. A wide range of assessment strategies is used to monitor learning in English. A commendable emphasis is placed on supporting pupils in reflecting on their learning.

A very welcoming, inclusive and positive school climate has been established to support pupils with special educational needs (SEN). Teachers work collaboratively to provide in-class support in English. The majority of pupils in classes for pupils with ASDs are provided with opportunities to engage in learning with their peers in mainstream classes. Individual support plans are in place for pupils at each stage of the National Educational Psychological Service's (NEPS) *Continuum of Support* process. Some of the targets outlined in pupils' plans, however, are not sufficiently specific

or measurable. Assessment data should be used as a reference point by all teachers when identifying needs, setting targets and monitoring progress.

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

The quality of whole-school planning in English is good. The policy was reviewed collaboratively with reference to the *Primary Language Curriculum*. Agreed whole-school approaches have been identified in relation to assessment, the teaching of the writing genres and comprehension strategies. These agreed approaches should be implemented consistently.

The school has engaged collaboratively in the SSE process to generate a school-improvement plan (SIP) for literacy. The current targets in the SIP are not sufficiently aligned with the identified focus on oral-language development. Baseline assessment data should be used in setting improvement targets for oral language and in monitoring progress.

# **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 Loch Mór Maigh broadly welcomes the findings of this subject inspection of English and its useful recommendations for the teachers to implement as reflective practitioners. There is a demonstrable, incremental track record of consistent SSE and implementation of improvements across the school, comprehensively and effectively addressed in our SIP and PIEW planning. The Board wishes to record, that in our experience, our teachers' high levels of level of industry, motivation, professional development, and pro-activity is something we are immensely proud of, and have benefitted our pupils' holistic development and wellbeing enormously. This is in spite of systemic challenges in relation to the growing rate of SEN in our school.

The school has been on a challenging journey of evolution in the past decade, with a shared vision of meeting the needs of all of our pupils, within the time and resources available to us. The teachers have maintained and improved learners' outcomes relative to the needs of our individual pupils. We acknowledge and celebrate this. We are confident that the provision of English in our school will continue to progress as the teachers advance the implementation of the New Primary Language Curriculum, in tandem with the recommendations provided by the Inspectorate.

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

*Teachers should provide more regular opportunities for pupils to present, explain and discuss their learning:* The Board is aware that our teachers strive to foster dialogic engagement in our school. Pupils are regularly assigned projects on cross-curricular topics using a variety of oral language genres, and engage in self-evaluation discussions in small group and whole class settings. Pupil input is sought for target setting. Teachers will place a greater emphasis on pupil feedback going forward, both in regular class discussion and through dedicated focus groups with our Student Council. Teachers will continue to implement dedicated 'conversation stations' in the Lift off to Literacy in-class support groups, to increase the pupils' vocabulary and language skills – with smart targets for each group based on assessment and focused learner outcomes. Teachers will continue to employ an increasing variety of teaching methodologies to enhance the learner experiences of our pupils also.

*Approaches to developing pupils' literacy skills should be implemented consistently at whole school level:* A New Primary Language Curriculum Plan was devised following staff collaboration in December 2019. Various other policies that inform the delivery of the English curriculum in the school have been reviewed also; particularly the SIP, Assessment Policy, SEN policy and Digital Strategy. Parents were involved in the SSE process encompassing these regular reviews. A new school planning template for English has been devised to reflect meaningful engagement with the new curriculum, and the SIP has been amended to reflect our commitment to refined practice, particularly in relation to setting smarter targets based on the gathering of specific baseline data. Teachers have also amended their short-term planning to ensure fortnightly plans are utilised going forward.

*Assessment data should be used more effectively in the setting and monitoring of school improvement targets for oral language:* The school's SIP focus for oral language targets improving the pupils' understanding and use of the social conventions of language. Teachers began gathering baseline data in relation to this in December 2019/January 2020. We continue our assessment of our pupils in order to build a clearer profile of our pupils' language attainment, and to set smarter targets in relation to the teaching and progression of oral language skills. To this end we are engaging with the Renfrew Language Scales, WellComm language assessment, the SESS functional language and communication toolkit and also PDST oral language checklist and rubrics.

## 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  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Very Good</b>    | <b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> 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 |
| <b>Good</b>         | <b>Good</b> 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   |
| <b>Satisfactory</b> | <b>Satisfactory</b> 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  |
| <b>Fair</b>         | <b>Fair</b> 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   |
| <b>Weak</b>         | <b>Weak</b> applies where there are serious deficiencies in the areas evaluated. Immediate and coordinated wholeschool 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;   |