Curriculum Evaluation

History

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>S N Na Fuar Coilleadh</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Craughwell</td>
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<td>Co Galway</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17051L</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 03-05-2017
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 inspector evaluated learning and teaching in History under the following headings:

1. Quality of pupils’ learning
2. Supporting pupils’ learning through learning 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.
### INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>03-05-2017</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to principal and deputy principal |

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### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta na Fuar Coileadh is a co-educational school in east Galway, under the patronage of the Catholic Archbishop of Tuam. It has four mainstream class teachers and two support teachers for pupils with special educational needs. It caters for pupils from junior infants to sixth class. At the time of the evaluation, there were ninety-three pupils enrolled.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning in History is very good.
- Pupils’ learning in History is supported by very high quality learning experiences.
- The quality of teachers’ practice in History is very good.
- While good use is made of information and communications technology (ICT) as a teaching tool, pupils do not currently have sufficient access to ICT to enhance their learning.
- Good assessment strategies currently in place include teacher observation and teacher-designed tests and tasks, although the focus is mainly on pupils’ recall of knowledge.
- The overall quality of planning to support learning in History is of a very high standard.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should develop the use of ICT as a learning tool in History.
- The range of assessment strategies for History should be further developed on a whole-school basis.

### DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

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

The overall quality of pupils’ learning is very good. In each setting observed, and in the focus-group discussion, pupils demonstrated a very high level of enthusiasm for learning History.

In general, pupils have a very good understanding of the history curriculum relevant to their class level. Pupils are enabled to discuss their knowledge competently, and their ability to use the key skills of working as an historian are highly commendable. Notably, pupils demonstrate a very well developed sense of cause and effect in History, and their ability to empathise with people and events from the past is very good.
Analysis of pupil copybooks indicates that pupils have frequent opportunities to interrogate primary and secondary sources of evidence from local, national and international history. In some cases, pupils enhance their learning with independent research, which is successfully shared with the class in a structured manner.

Pupils’ knowledge of the locality is commendable. They have established a very good sense of the history of the school and the immediate locality. The history of the local towns is also an integral part of their learning. However, further exploration of how this learning of local history could be developed incrementally throughout the school would be beneficial.

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

The learning experiences provided in History are very good. In each lesson observed, pupils were engaged very successfully by interesting learning activities, interaction with high-quality resources and relevant collaborative learning opportunities. Some teachers make very effective use of timelines, and this practice should be expanded throughout the school. The communal areas of the school promote learning in History periodically throughout the year. The learning experiences are strengthened through excellent cross-curricular links. Furthermore, pupils visit local sites of interest and guest speakers are invited to the school on occasion to enhance the learning of local and national history.

The quality of teachers’ practice in History is highly commendable. In each setting, learning was based on previous related knowledge and was consolidated at the end of the lesson very effectively. Due consideration is given to supporting different pupil ability levels, and work in copybooks indicates that tasks are appropriately differentiated according to class level where relevant. Some teachers make good use of information and communications technology (ICT) as a teaching tool, and the use of social media to celebrate pupil learning in the infant setting is highly commendable. Plans are underway to expand the schools’ ICT infrastructure, as currently pupils do not have sufficient access to ICT resources for learning. When completed, teachers should provide pupils with more opportunities to use ICT as a means of carrying out independent research, consolidating their learning and presenting their work to relevant audiences.

The overall quality of assessment in History is good. Very clear use of teacher observation was noted in each setting, and in most instances these observations led to adapted teaching and the provision of additional support to pupils in need. In addition, pupil achievement is monitored through teacher-designed tests, tasks and quizzes, and progress is recorded in some cases. Work in copybooks is corrected frequently. To extend this good practice, the school should design and implement a broader range of practical, useful assessment tools to record progress and to inform future instruction. The sharing of success criteria with pupils as a framework for assessment in this regard would be of benefit.

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

Very effective school planning is in place. The whole-school plan provides very good instructional guidance to teachers for delivering a balanced and developmental programme of work throughout the school. To this end, the two-year plan for each class level is highly effective. The plan also contains a very clear outline of incremental skills’ development. The collaborative approach to school planning
has created a shared sense of ownership and responsibility among all teachers for developing and implementing a communal approach to history instruction.

As a result of this very high quality whole-school planning, individual teacher planning is also very good. A clear and definite link between the history curriculum, the whole-school plan and teachers’ long-term and short-term plans is evident, and the lessons observed during the evaluation demonstrated that this planning very successfully impacts on teaching and learning. Monthly progress records confirm the progressive nature of pupil learning in History.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

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

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 school has purchased 10 new iPads. An initial period of time will be used to familiarise pupils with their potential as learning and assessment tools. They will also be given opportunities to present work using IT.
- Coldwood N.S. will design and apply a broad range of assessment tools to record progress and to inform future instruction e.g. rubrics to assess content and skills acquired. Pupils will be made aware of success criteria prior to engaging in learning. They will also engage in self-reflection as part of the overall area of assessment.
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 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>Very Good</td>
<td>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.</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>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 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>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.</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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<tr>
<td>Fair</td>
<td>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.</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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<tr>
<td>Weak</td>
<td>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.</td>
<td>Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;</td>
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