Curriculum Evaluation

English

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Cholmcille/Clouna National School</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Ennistymon</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>County Clare</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17270A</td>
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Date of inspection: 13-02-2019
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 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

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<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>12-02-2019 and 13-02-2019</th>
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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
- Review of relevant documents
- Pupil focus-group interview

CONTEXT

Scoil Cholmcille (Clouna National School) is located in Clouna, approximately six kilometres from Ennistymon, County Clare. This school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Galway, Kilmacduagh and Kilfenora and has three mainstream class teachers, including a recently appointed teaching principal. A special education teacher (SET) is based in the school and also works in another school in the county. There were fifty-four pupils enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils’ learning in English is good; the reading fluency of pupils at some junior class levels is limited.
- Pupils’ learning experiences in English are good overall; pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to discuss their learning in a few of the lessons observed.
- The overall quality of teaching is good; there is an over-reliance on textbook activities to develop pupils’ literacy skills.
- The overall quality of school planning for English is good.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The reading fluency of pupils at some junior class levels should be further improved.
- Opportunities for pupils to discuss their thinking and learning should be a key feature of lessons in English.
- Teachers should prepare meaningful learning activities to support the development of pupils’ literacy skills according to their levels of ability.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The overall quality of learning in English is good. Most pupils were engaged in their learning and motivated to learn during the lessons observed.

Most pupils in the middle and senior classes read with fluency and expression. While the majority of pupils could discuss some of the comprehension strategies, greater emphasis should be placed on developing pupils’ higher-order literacy skills at middle and senior class levels. Overall, pupils in the junior classes demonstrated good phonological awareness and word-attack skills. The reading fluency of pupils at some junior class levels needs to be further improved.

Most pupils were able to recite a range of poetry with confidence and enthusiasm. The majority of pupils could give information and explain points of view. It is commendable that the school has
identified vocabulary development as an area for improvement. There was some evidence of actions for improvement in this area in classrooms. However, greater emphasis should be placed on whole-school approaches to improving pupils’ confidence and confidence in oral language.

The majority of pupils demonstrated a good understanding of the writing genres and good samples of their writing across the genres, including poetry, were displayed in classrooms and on corridors.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The overall quality of learning experiences in English is good; this ranged from very good to satisfactory in the lessons observed. Learning experiences were highly effective when they were engaged in teacher-designed learning tasks and activities suitable for the learning objectives of the lesson.

Pupils did not have sufficient opportunities to discuss their learning in a few of the lessons observed. Opportunities for pupils to discuss their thinking and learning should be a key feature of lessons in English. The implementation of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework is effective in supporting the junior pupils’ social, communication and language skills.

All pupils have opportunities to apply their learning in English to other curricular areas. A range of co-curricular activities supports the pupils’ learning in English. In the focus-group discussion, pupils reported that they particularly enjoy engaging in writing activities based on their learning activities in other curricular areas. Further opportunities for pupils to engage with authors, poets and the local library should be explored.

Positive and respectful interactions between teachers and pupils were observed in all classrooms during the evaluation. The overall quality of teaching in the lessons observed was good, with elements of very good practice observed. Where practice was highly effective, teachers shared the learning objective with pupils, used a range of teaching methods including ICT and prepared stimulating and appropriately challenging learning activities. In some settings, there was evidence of an over-reliance on textbook-based activities. Teachers should prepare learning tasks and activities tailored to best support the development of pupils’ literacy skills. Greater links between writing and oral activities should be implemented.

It is commendable that in-class models of support teaching are used to improve the pupils’ reading skills. This practice should be further developed and extended to facilitate more focused small-group literacy instruction. Emphasis should be placed on the development of the range of reading and comprehension skills according to pupils’ ability levels. The recent investment in graded readers, to support differentiated reading instruction in junior classes, is highly commendable.

Overall, teachers’ individual planning is satisfactory. A whole-school approach to teachers’ fortnightly planning, with a clearer identification of learning activities and intended learner outcomes, should be agreed and implemented.

The overall quality of assessment is good. A range of both assessment for learning and assessment of learning practices is implemented in all classes. While pupils’ work in copybooks is corrected, there is a need to provide more regular constructive feedback to pupils in writing, to enhance the learning process. The introduction of The National Educational Psychological Service’s (NEPS) Continuum of Support is highly commendable. To enhance this work, specific and measurable targets should be identified for all pupils in receipt of support. Assessment data should be included in pupils’ support files.
3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

The overall quality of school planning is good. Commendably, the whole-school plan for English has been reviewed collaboratively. The plan outlines clearly the aspects of grammar, phonics and handwriting to be taught at each class level. Building on this good practice, more explicit guidance on the teaching of comprehension strategies, and a list of novels to be read at middle and senior class levels, should be included in the plan.

The school has engaged positively with the school self-evaluation (SSE) process and actions for improvement have been identified. However, specific and measureable targets should be devised. The impact of identified actions for improvement should be reviewed regularly.
Appendix

TO THE REPORT

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

The staff and Board of Management of Scoil Cholmcille Clouna welcome the very positive findings of this curriculum evaluation report in English. In particular the Board of Management welcomes the affirmation of our high standards and good practices in teaching and learning in the school. We are delighted that so many of the school’s strengths in the area of English have been highlighted.

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 staff and Board of Management of Scoil Cholmcille, Clouna acknowledge the findings contained in this report. We are delighted our efforts in establishing best practice in the school have been acknowledged. We are very pleased that our in-class models of support teaching to improve pupils’ reading and fluency skills have been commended and that our investment in graded readers to support differentiated reading instruction in junior classes is highly commendable. The outcome of our continued development and concentration in this area, will result in increased achievement across all class levels. We are committed to building on this great work and have planned further investment to maximise on the benefits throughout the school.

We have already addressed other recommendations in the report including the refinement of our whole school plan for English to include other learning activities and discussion time in teachers’ fortnightly planning. We are committed to implementing the recommendations and findings outlined in the report and to build on the good practice affirmed.
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>
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<tr>
<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 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><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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