

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	Scoil Mhuire
Seoladh na scoile / School address	Wolfhill Co. Laois
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	17441B

Date of inspection: 20-01-2020



**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 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

Date of inspection	20-01-2020
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal and teachers• Review of relevant documents• Pupil focus-group interview	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Mhuire, Wolfhill, Co. Laois is a rural, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin. The school has two mainstream teachers plus an allocation of special education hours delivered on a job-sharing basis by teachers from another school. There are currently 16 pupils enrolled in the school who are provided for across two multi-grade settings.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils' learning outcomes in English is good.
- Pupils' learning experiences are of good quality.
- While the quality of teaching is good, there is scope to extend assessment practices and, in particular, to monitor more closely the progress of pupils in the junior setting.
- The quality of school planning is satisfactory but the school plan is not used sufficiently to guide teachers' planning for progression in pupils' learning outcomes.
- While pupils with identified learning needs in English are supported effectively, there is scope to provide greater support for the language development of pupils in the junior setting.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should provide targeted support for pupils' language development in the junior setting through early intervention and prevention programmes.
- Teachers in all settings should ensure that the whole-school plan for English is used to inform their planning.
- A whole-school approach to assessment should be agreed and implemented by all teachers to ensure that pupils' language development at all class levels is monitored carefully and that their language learning needs are identified and used to inform planning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

The quality of learner outcomes is good. All pupils present as motivated learners and engage meaningfully in classroom discussions. Pupils in the senior setting enjoy their learning in English and during the focus-group interview, spoke positively of their engagement with the language. They indicated a liking for and interest in reading and could identify the features of good storytelling and how to engage an audience. They said they enjoy having stories read to them and they commented positively on the opportunities and support given to them to write their own stories and to create books.

Pupils in the junior setting are positive also regarding their learning in English. During the evaluation, they presented as good listeners who engaged well with the story being read. They were keen to answer questions and to offer opinions, to speculate and to make meaningful connections with their own real-life experiences. They engaged in worthwhile learning activities including those aimed at developing vocabulary and oral language skills. A consistent and comprehensive approach to the development of pupils' early literacy skills was not evident however, and more can be done to promote their independent reading and writing skills. A targeted approach that puts appropriate emphasis on the development of phonics and decoding skills, together with the ongoing monitoring of progress, is required to support pupils in this regard.

Pupils in the senior classes demonstrate a good understanding of the elements of a range of writing genres and are given regular opportunities to practise their independent writing skills. Examples of good quality written work were in evidence in both settings but where learning outcomes were best, pupils had been given opportunities to express themselves creatively through writing. Such promotion of independent expression should be a regular feature of provision in both settings.

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

The quality of learner experiences is good. The school promotes an appreciation of English and pupils' work is celebrated in the learning environment. Pupils are given opportunities to engage in worthwhile learning experiences such as storytellers visiting the school, drama productions and debating competitions. They are given frequent opportunities to present their work and to perform for other pupils. In the lessons observed, pupils engaged collaboratively and independently on meaningful tasks. The good practice observed in the senior setting in which pupils were encouraged to reflect on their learning should be developed further and extended throughout the school through greater use of formative feedback.

Teachers' planning supports the delivery of well-paced lessons that reflect clear, curriculum-appropriate learning objectives. Teachers make skilful use of questioning to deepen pupils' engagement with learning. They promote respectful interactions and are affirmative of pupils' efforts. In the senior setting, poetry was used in a very effective manner to encourage playful engagement with language and to stimulate critical analysis of the choice of vocabulary used in the poem in question.

Teachers in mainstream and special education settings monitor pupil progress but the range and quality of assessment strategies in use vary, as does the extent to which assessment data is used to inform planning for pupils' learning outcomes. A comprehensive, whole-school approach to assessment should be implemented to ensure consistency in the gathering and use of data and to support teachers in planning for the progress of all pupils across all strands of the curriculum.

Teachers in special education settings provide good support to pupils with specific learning needs through the effective delivery of individualised programmes of learning. There is scope, however, to make greater use of special education teaching resources to respond to the language learning needs of pupils in the junior setting. It is recommended that early-intervention and prevention programmes form part of the school's provision for these pupils.

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

The quality of school planning is satisfactory. A whole-school plan for English offers good guidance to teachers in implementing the curriculum at each class level. The plan does not impact sufficiently, however, on teachers' practice and assessment approaches. The school engages in school self-evaluation and the process has been effective in improving pupils' oral language skills.

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
Very Good	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.	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
Good	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 <i>very good</i> standard.	Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement
Satisfactory	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.	Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas
Fair	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.	Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve
Weak	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.	Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Area 1 Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the many positive findings in the report. It notes in particular that the quality of pupils' learning outcomes was found to be good and that pupils' learning experiences were assessed as being of good quality.

Area 2 Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection.

The Board accepts the recommendations set out in the report and has already begun work on their implementation to date, work has begun on enhancing assessment of English language in the junior classroom and guided reading has commenced.

The new English policy has been ratified and will inform teacher planning.