Curriculum Evaluation

History

REPORT

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Sn Mhuire</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Ballyhogue  
Enniscorthy  
Co. Wexford |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 17841R |

Date of inspection: 07-06-2019
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(s) evaluated learning and teaching in [Subject] 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 | 07-06-2019
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Inspection activities undertaken | • Discussion with principal and teachers  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Pupil focus-group interview  
• Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to principal and teachers

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Mhuire National School, Ballyhogue, is a rural, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Ferns. There are currently twenty-six pupils enrolled with two class teachers and one shared support teacher, who is based in the school. The school participates in Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. It has undergone a significant amount of change in the last number of years and both the principal and chairperson of the board are very recent appointments.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• Overall, the quality of pupils’ learning in History is good; pupils are highly interested and motivated learners who find History enjoyable.

• While some pupils can apply the skills of cause and effect competently, describe their learning and discuss certain aspects of local history, others are less confident.

• Good quality learning experiences are provided for pupils with a good range of teaching approaches and resources used effectively to ensure that pupils are actively engaged in learning both collaboratively and independently.

• The overall quality of teachers’ practice is high; they work diligently to promote enjoyment of and interest in History, and to secure positive learning outcomes for pupils.

• The overall quality of assessment is satisfactory; possibilities for improvement exist in the systematic monitoring of pupils’ progress in History.

• Overall the school plans competently for the delivery of History and has begun a review of the whole-school plan.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• Further opportunities for all pupils to embed and reinforce material covered, discuss and describe their learning, especially in relation to local History, should be provided.

• To ensure pupils’ progress in History is monitored effectively, strategies to assess pupils’ knowledge and skills and practices to enable pupils to reflect on and assess their own learning, should developed on a whole-school basis.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

Overall, the quality of pupils’ learning in History is good and the pupils present as highly interested and motivated learners. In their interactions during the pupil focus group discussion, they indicated
that they find History interesting and see it as an opportunity to learn from the experiences of people in the past. The pupils demonstrate an understanding of concepts such as change and continuity and in middle and senior classes, they enjoy gathering evidence for project work. Their research into various topics has helped to deepen their knowledge of historical events and develop their ability to use and interpret evidence. In infant and junior classes, the pupils recount the stories they have learned knowledgeably and enthusiastically. A very valuable collection of relevant storybooks and artefacts are attractively displayed in the Infant room. More regular opportunities for pupils to handle and discuss such primary and secondary sources of evidence will serve to further develop their skills as historians.

Learning environments in the school are print and visually rich and successfully support an appreciation of History. An understanding of time and chronology is promoted through a whole-school emphasis on the display and use of timelines. Where these timelines were most effective as a learning aid, they were contextualised and referred to during lessons. While some pupils can apply the skills of cause and effect competently and discuss certain aspects of local history, others are less confident. In order to strengthen the ability of all pupils to work as historians, there is a need to further embed and reinforce material covered and develop their ability to discuss and describe their learning, especially in relation to local history.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
Good quality learning experiences are provided for pupils in History. A good range of teaching approaches and resources is used effectively to ensure that pupils are active during lessons, with opportunities for pupils to work both collaboratively and independently. Pupils in the focus group identified the use of project work, drama and historical novels, as particularly effective in deepening their understanding, developing empathy and making lessons very engaging. They report that they can apply their learning in History to learning in other curriculum areas and the successful integration with other subjects, including Science and the Visual Arts, is praised. Effective use is also made of information and communications technology (ICT) during lessons.

The overall quality of teachers’ practice is high. They demonstrate good levels of enthusiasm for History and they work diligently to promote enjoyment of and interest in the subject among the pupils. They have high expectations for their pupils’ learning. All observed lessons were well structured, paced and presented. Effective linkage with previous learning was evident and new learning intentions were shared with the pupils. Literacy skills, including the explicit development of vocabulary, sequencing, oral language and writing, were taught effectively as part of lessons in History.

All teachers plan for History to prepare gainful lessons. While the specific language, skills and activities to be taught are identified in some instances in short-term plans, the clearer identification of desired learner outcomes in all short-term planning is advised. Teachers create inclusive, orderly learning environments and demonstrated highly effective classroom management skills.

Overall there is satisfactory assessment of pupils’ progress in History and pupils’ copy work is well monitored with motivational feedback. In addition to employing such assessment tools to monitor pupils’ learning in the subject, a more cohesive, consistent approach to monitoring pupils’ progress in History should be developed at whole-school level. This should include strategies to assess pupils’ knowledge and skills. Practices to enable pupils to reflect on and assess their own learning should also be further developed.
3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

Overall the school plans competently for the delivery of History. Teachers have recently begun a review of the whole-school plan for History and devised an outline of a programme for History suitable for the school’s multi-class context. The planned continuation of this review of the school plan is welcomed. The strengthening of links with local history and the provision of greater clarity in relation to how themes will be incrementally dealt with, as pupils progress from class to class, is advised.
## 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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<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<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 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><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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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 considers the report to be an accurate assessment of the teaching and learning of History in our school. It highlights the high quality of teachers’ practice in our school and the motivated and interested nature of the pupils’ learning. The fact that school staff work diligently to secure positive learning outcomes for the pupils is also highlighted by the report. The board agrees that whole school planning and assessment of History needs to be addressed, including systematic monitoring of pupils’ progress, so as to raise the standard of teaching and learning.

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 immediate priority is to review the Plean Scoile for SESE which will inform and guide teachers’ individual planning and classroom practice. Teachers from Junior and Senior levels will address areas such as content, methodologies and planning resources, so as to ensure that themes will be effectively and incrementally dealt with, as pupils move from class to class. Strengthening links with local history will also be prioritised in this review.
Evaluation and Assessment strategies will be addressed and agreed by all staff members so that the pupils learning will be monitored effectively and strategies will be introduced which will enable pupils to reflect on their own progress as learners. As recommended in the report, systematic monitoring of pupils’ progress will be implemented and The NCCA Assessment Book will be used as a resource to guide best practice.
In order to provide further opportunities for the all pupils to embed and reinforce material covered, field trips and local History expeditions will be carefully planned at each class level. Local History, historical sites and expertise will be used to enhance the learning experience for children in this respect.