Curriculum Evaluation

History

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School name</th>
<th>Scoil Iognáid de Rís</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>School address</td>
<td>Stephen Street</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Kilkenny</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>R95EC93</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Roll number</td>
<td>17867M</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of inspection: 07-03-2018
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 History 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.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection  07-03-2018
Inspection activities undertaken

- Discussion with principal
- Review of relevant documents
- Pupil focus-group interview
- Observation of teaching and learning
- Examination of pupils’ work
- Interaction with pupils
- Feedback to principal and deputy principal

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Iognáid de Rí is a primary school in Kilkenny city catering for boys from second to sixth class. It operates under the patronage of the Edmund Rice School Trust. At the time of the evaluation there were 206 pupils enrolled at the school.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils’ learning in History is very good; project work and cross-curricular learning are particularly noteworthy.
- While there is good assessment of pupils’ learning in History in some lessons, there is scope to develop a wider range of assessment strategies.
- Pupils engage in highly-effective learner experiences in History.
- The quality of planning for History is satisfactory; the whole-school plan offers limited guidance to teachers on content and skills development.
- Teachers’ practice is of a high quality with very positive classroom interactions in evidence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A whole-school plan for History should be developed which informs and guides teachers’ individual planning and classroom practice.
- All teachers should develop assessment strategies which monitor pupils’ progress in History and which enable pupils to reflect on their progress as learners.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of pupils’ learning in History is very good. During classroom observations, pupils engaged enthusiastically in their learning and demonstrated very high levels of motivation when completing tasks in History. In the focus group interview, pupils indicated that History was one of their favourite subjects as they liked giving their opinions and discussing their learning.

Pupils exhibit good understanding of historical skills and can effectively engage with primary and secondary sources. They effectively use subject-specific vocabulary and appropriate historical language to explain their learning. Pupils can recall details of prior learning and lessons in History. In almost all cases, pupils’ learning outcomes were of a very high quality. Pupils’
copybooks and project work provide evidence of the high quality learning in History and the wide range of topics covered. Commendably, many topics are explored at cross-curricular level. The use of novels to support the development of historical skills is particularly notable. There is some evidence of pupils’ learning in local history. There is scope to enhance the provision for pupils’ learning in local history through documenting a whole-school developmental approach to fieldtrips. This should identify potential sites for each class level and consider the focus of intended learning.

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

Overall, the quality of pupils’ learner experiences is very good. Pupils’ experience a wide range of interesting learning activities in History. During the focus group, pupils discussed how they learned History through role play, art, quizzes, projects, fieldtrips, debates and information and communication technology (ICT). Learning experiences are challenging and pupils are given opportunities to work as historians both independently and collaboratively on interesting tasks.

Overall, the quality of teachers’ practice in History is very good. Teachers exhibit very good subject and pedagogical knowledge and facilitate pupils’ learning through skilful questioning and clear communication. Lessons are well structured, pupils’ prior knowledge is accessed and tasks are creative and interesting. Teachers use a wide range of resources to engage pupils and to explain key concepts. Historical terminology is explicitly taught. Age appropriate timelines are displayed in the majority of lessons. Interactions between teachers and pupils are respectful, positive and inclusive.

Overall pupils’ learning in History is evaluated effectively through a range of assessment strategies. In the majority of lessons, teacher questioning, observation and tests are used to monitor pupils’ learning in History. These practices should be extended across the school. All teachers should develop assessment strategies which enable teachers to monitor pupils’ progress in History and which enable pupils to reflect on their progress as learners. Assessment rubrics and checklists would support pupils’ self and peer assessment of project work. Teachers should provide written feedback to pupils on the quality of their learning in copybooks and provide regular opportunities for pupils to assess their own learning.

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

The quality of school planning in progressing pupils’ learning is satisfactory. The school has successfully engaged with the SSE process in literacy and numeracy. The school has not yet chosen to focus on History as an area for improvement. All teachers prepare objective-based short and long term plans. Commendably, teachers plan together using an agreed template. While History is appropriately timetabled in mainstream classes, school leaders should ensure that pupils are not consistently being withdrawn for additional support during History lessons.

The current whole-school History plan offers teachers limited guidance on knowledge and skills development. A whole-school plan for History should be developed which informs and guides teachers’ individual planning and classroom practice. The school should consider how content is to be covered at each class level in order to ensure progression throughout the school. Agreed teaching methodologies and assessment practices should be identified and a developmental approach to local history should be included.
4. CHILD PROTECTION

During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school’s reception area.
3. The school has a Child Protection policy.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
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 the school. It highlights the strengths of teacher practice and engagement with the programme and especially the quality of project work which has been traditionally of a very high standard in the school. The positive engagement of pupils and teachers is also highlighted. The board agrees that whole school planning and assessment needs to be addressed 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 update 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, planning resources, and best practice so as to ensure that the content for each class level is comprehensively covered in order to ensure progression throughout the school.
- Evaluation and Assessment strategies will be addressed and agreed by all staff members so that the pupils learning will be monitored and which will enable pupils to reflect on their progress as learners. As recommended in the report, assessment rubrics and checklists will be used by all teachers. The NCCA Assessment Book will be used as a resource to guide best practice.
- So as to avoid repetition, field trips and local History expeditions will be carefully planned at each class level. They are an integral part of the History Programme. Local expertise will be used to enhance the learning experience for children.
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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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 <strong>outstanding</strong> 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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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 <strong>very good</strong> standard.</td>
<td>Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>