An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
English

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Náisiúnta Mhuire</th>
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<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Abbey Road</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Navan</td>
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<td></td>
<td>County Meath</td>
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<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>17969U</td>
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Date of inspection: 05-03-2019
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 inspectors 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 was given an opportunity to comment in writing on the findings and recommendations of the report; a response was not received from the board.

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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<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Inspection activities undertaken</strong></td>
<td><strong>Observation of teaching and learning</strong></td>
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<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>• Pupil focus-group interview</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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**SCHOOL CONTEXT**
Scoil Mhuire is a Roman Catholic school under the patronage of the Bishop of Meath. It is a mainstream school for pupils from junior infants to sixth class and there are currently 190 pupils enrolled. There are also two classes for pupils with Autistic Spectrum Disorders (ASD) and there are twelve pupils enrolled in these classes. Scoil Mhuire participates in Band 2 of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion.

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**
- The quality of pupils’ learning outcomes in English is good; pupils presented as enthusiastic, knowledgeable and motivated learners across all observed learning settings.
- The quality of learner experiences is very good; all teachers are successful in creating supportive and engaging learning environments for pupils.
- Support lessons for pupils with learning needs in English are generally very effective; while these lessons involve active learning experiences for pupils, they are overly focused on the teaching of vocabulary.
- Standardised test scores in reading are not fully analysed which reduces their potential to impact on learning.
- The quality of school self-evaluation (SSE) is very good; planning is undertaken collaboratively, useful initiatives have been implemented and teachers demonstrate a very good capacity to consider how teaching and learning can develop in the school.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**
- Support lessons for pupils with EAL learning needs should be linguistically richer with a stronger emphasis on the teaching, modelling and application of language and sentence structures.
Standardised test scores for pupils in reading should be further analysed particularly in terms of cohorts of pupils; this will enhance teachers’ understanding of the impact of their teaching on attainment and the precise learning needs of pupils.

### Detailed Findings and Recommendations

#### 1. The Quality of Pupils’ Learning

The quality of pupils’ learning outcomes in English is good. During the evaluation, pupils presented as motivated learners across all observed learning settings; they also demonstrated a confidence and interest in words and an enthusiasm for discussion. Lessons were generally pitched at the correct level and it was evident that pupils had a good knowledge and understanding of their previous learning.

As they progress through the school, pupils demonstrate good oral language skills and this was evident in their capacity to talk about and explain their learning across a range of curriculum areas. In the senior class, pupils take pride in being able to recite poetry confidently but this ability is not consistently developed from class to class; there is potential to extend this practice throughout the school. The language learning context in all mainstream classes would be further enriched through finding a place for the home languages of pupils in the day-to-day life of the classroom.

Pupils were observed to read confidently from a range of texts. Standardised test scores in reading are not fully analysed which reduces their potential to impact on teaching and learning. These test scores should be further analysed particularly in terms of cohorts of pupils; this will enhance teachers’ understanding of the impact of their teaching on pupils’ attainment and the precise learning needs of pupils.

Pupils were very knowledgeable about a range of writing genres and conventions and were able to successfully apply this knowledge in their own writing. It is good practice that pupils are also applying their knowledge of different writing genres across the curriculum; this writing is of a good quality. Examples of pupils’ independent writing indicate that pupils have written about interesting topics, that they have autonomy in the selection of topics and that they can write in a variety of genres. In some classes, this free writing could be undertaken more regularly.

The quality of learning for pupils in receipt of additional support is good. The observed support lessons were very effective; group and individual plans identified learning needs clearly and precisely and teaching was skillful and directed towards meeting pupils’ needs. Teachers provided pupils with very focused feedback and there was very good pupil engagement.

While lessons for pupils with EAL needs are activity based, the observed lessons were overly focused on the teaching of vocabulary. EAL lessons should be linguistically richer with a stronger emphasis on the teaching and modelling of language structures including correct word order and prepositions, facilitating pupils in structuring and sequencing a number of sentences correctly and explicitly demonstrating to pupils how they can apply their previous learning in their new learning. A greater emphasis should be placed by teachers on maintaining and encouraging these pupils to maintain a learning log of new vocabulary and new sentence structures; this should be undertaken at the conclusion of each lesson and referenced at the beginning of each new lesson. This would assist
pupils with EAL needs in becoming more aware of their progress thereby enhancing their confidence and competence in English.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The quality of learner experiences and teachers’ practice is very good. All teachers are successful in creating supportive and engaging learning environments for pupils which encourage their love of language and their interest in words. Word-walls in classrooms are very effective in helping pupils to understand and categorise words and are very effective in developing both oral and written vocabulary.

Generally, good quality planning guides EAL and support provision. To optimise the impact of this planning, learning targets should be included in short-term planning to create direct links between the activities undertaken and pupils’ needs. This EAL dimension should also permeate general support lessons in English which include pupils with EAL needs.

Pupils in the infant classes engage well in Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework and stimulating learning experiences are being created for pupils. These learning experiences are organised very effectively by the teachers. While there is some record-keeping being maintained by teachers, there is potential to develop this further in order to facilitate pupils to both consolidate and apply language that has been learned.

Pupils at a number of class levels talked enthusiastically about their performance in class-plays and it was evident that these plays have been linguistically rich learning experiences for pupils. Pupils were observed to engage very effectively in improvised drama and demonstrated a good understanding and capacity to structure and convey a coherent story-line with a good sense of the conventions of drama. Teachers use drama methodologies such as ‘hot seating’ very effectively to stimulate pupil engagement and discussion thereby enriching the learning experience for pupils. Pupils enjoy reading and discussing class novels and these discussions are of a good quality. Participation in World Book Day is a well-established tradition in the school and there is evidence of teachers implementing a wide range of meaningful learning experiences for pupils.

There are a few instances where pupils are being withdrawn from the classroom setting for all aspects of the English curriculum. This grouping and withdrawal of pupils according to attainment levels for all aspects of English should be monitored to ensure that class teachers retain sufficient oversight of pupils’ learning to meet their responsibilities as the classroom teacher. Classroom-based grouping for the teaching of English involving both classroom teacher and support teachers is generally resulting in focused teaching and very good levels of pupil engagement and progress. This approach is particularly effective where teachers engage in contemporaneous monitoring and recording of pupils’ progress and where these observations are shared with pupils. At infant level the teaching of reading in this setting is effective in encouraging pupil effort but should place a stronger emphasis on the explicit teaching of words and the modelling of reading in advance of pupils’ reading.

All teachers maintain assessment records for English and there are examples of this information being used very effectively to influence the development and structure of lessons. Pupils’ written work is monitored effectively and teachers provide pupils with useful feedback which is impacting positively on subsequent learning.
3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING

The quality of school planning, including SSE, is good. Planning is undertaken collaboratively and teachers demonstrate a very good capacity to consider how teaching and learning can develop in the school. There is potential to further refine DEIS planning targets in the area of literacy through further analysing standardised test scores according to the needs of different groups of pupils.
**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>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</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 <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>
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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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