An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna  
Department of Education and Skills  

Curriculum Evaluation  
English  

REPORT  

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<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Diarmada N.S.</th>
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<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Castlepollard, Co Westmeath.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>18036U</td>
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Date of inspection: 21-01-2019
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 on the findings and recommendations of the report; the board chose to accept the report without response.

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.
Scoil Náisiúnta Diarmada is a rural, co-educational primary school in Whitehall, Castlepollard, Co. Westmeath. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Meath. At the time of the evaluation, there were seventy-four pupils enrolled in the school with three mainstream class teachers, one full-time and one part-time special education teachers (SET).

**SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:**

**FINDINGS**

- Pupils’ learning in English is of a very high quality; they attain a very high standard in reading and write purposefully in a variety of genres.
- The quality of pupils’ learning experiences in English is very good.
- The teaching of English is highly commendable.
- While all teachers maintain a wide range of assessment information on their pupils, they do not make sufficient use of the assessment data to inform teaching and learning.
- Whole-school planning and school self-evaluation (SSE) processes in English are very good.
- The principal promotes a culture of improvement and facilitates high levels of collaboration among the staff.

**RECOMMENDATIONS**

- Teachers should analyse assessment data methodically to identify opportunities for differentiation and this analysis should be reflected clearly in teachers’ short-term planning.

**DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. **THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING**

The quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good. The pupils are engaged learners who apply themselves enthusiastically to their tasks. The teachers ensure that the pupils experience language-rich classrooms through the provision of print-rich displays. During a focus-group discussion, the pupils expressed their enjoyment of English and described their lessons as fun. The school has engaged very well with the *Primary Language Curriculum*. Teachers effectively use it in their planning for all strands and elements of the English curriculum in infant and junior classes.
Pupils in all classrooms have frequent opportunities to engage in talk and discussion and share their ideas with their classmates. They use and understand a very wide vocabulary, choosing appropriate words to name and describe objects and events. The pupils are very adept at asking and answering a variety of open and closed questions. They recite a range of poems with expression and can capably sustain conversations on a range of topics.

Pupils’ achievements in reading are of a very high standard with many confidently reading and applying comprehension strategies independently. In the senior classes, pupils benefit from the use of English novels to develop vocabulary, fluency and comprehension. Pupils read a variety of books for interest, research and pleasure and teachers read aloud to classes regularly. The introduction of levelled readers in the school is commendable.

Pupils’ writing skills are at a high level. There is progression in pupils’ writing as they move from class to class. Pupils are enabled to write creatively through engagement with a number of specific genres of writing. Many exemplary samples of writing in terms of content and presentation were noted in copybooks and wall displays during the evaluation. The whole-school approach to the teaching of penmanship is impacting positively on the presentation of the pupils’ work. The provision of constructive feedback in pupils’ copybooks is advised.

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

Teachers provide very high quality learning experiences to pupils in English. The pupils are given suitably challenging and relevant learning opportunities including play and storytelling. Pair and group work was a regular feature of lessons observed. The contributions of pupils are actively listened to and respected by teachers. Pupils have access to well-stocked libraries, resources, literacy and language games. Teachers take an integrated approach to the development of pupils’ oral, reading and writing skills.

The quality of teaching is of a very high standard. Teachers prepare purposeful and challenging learning activities for the strands of the English curriculum. They identify suitable resources for the lessons and pupils use these very effectively to support their learning. Teachers use a wide variety of approaches such as whole-class teaching, pair work and group work to provide pupils with opportunities to consolidate their literacy skills. The teachers are clear communicators and deliver well-structured and suitably paced lessons. Features of very good practice include the sharing of appropriately challenging learning objectives with pupils, meaningful integration across other subjects and teachers modelling very high quality language for pupils.

The quality of assessment in English is good. Standardised tests are administered annually. Data from these assessments is used to identify pupils for supplementary support teaching. While teachers use a range of assessment approaches to assess and record pupils’ progress in English, there is scope for teachers to analyse the data more methodically to identify opportunities for differentiation and to reflect this analysis more clearly in short-term planning. Effective pupil self-assessment and peer-assessment strategies were evident, enabling pupils to reflect on their own learning.

The overall quality of support for pupils who experience difficulty with English and for those whom English is an additional language (EAL) is good. Teachers support these pupils very well through the organisation of in-class support, station teaching and withdrawal of pupils individually and in pairs. They use a range of diagnostic assessments effectively to identify the priority learning needs of these
pupils. Teachers diligently prepare student support files for all pupils receiving additional support. There is scope to outline the learning targets in the support plans in a time-bound manner and these clear learning targets should be reflected in the support teachers’ short-term planning on a weekly basis.

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

The quality of whole-school planning for English is of a very high standard. The school plan very effectively informs and reflects current practice in the school. It guides the teachers’ individual preparation and work in their classrooms.

The principal promotes a culture of improvement and facilitates high levels of collaboration among the staff. She effectively leads the schools’ engagement in a continuous process of self-evaluation. Teachers have engaged productively in a wide range of continuous professional development.

The school has engaged very well in the SSE process in the area of English. The school improvement plan for English identified oral language and writing for further development and very clear targets and actions for improvement have been identified.
## 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 <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><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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