An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
English

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Ballygown NS</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Castletownroche  
Co. Cork |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 18266O |

Date of inspection: 14-02-2019
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 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  14-02-2019
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
Ballygown NS is a co-educational rural primary school with a current enrolment of 122 pupils. The school has a staffing of 5 mainstream teachers and 3 support teachers, one of whom is shared with another school. The school operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cloyne.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning is very good.
- The opportunities pupils in all classes experience to explore and create poetry uniquely contribute to their ability to creatively express themselves and empathise with others.
- The quality of teaching is very good overall and teachers successfully create inclusive, child-centred learning environments; further development of pupils’ writing portfolios would enhance assessment practices.
- Teachers’ collective and collaborative practices are highly praised; further sharing of some very good practices observed in planning and assessment would enhance whole-school approaches in the area of literacy.
- The school has engaged positively with school self-evaluation and the impact of this work is evident in pupils’ work throughout the school.
- The whole-school plan successfully informs practice; however, further guidance in the development and progression of oral language is required.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The development of writing portfolios to capture the range of work that pupils have completed is advised in order to inform assessment of learning and assessment for learning practices.
- The very good planning and assessment practices observed in some settings should be shared to further augment whole-school approaches to these aspects of provision.
- The whole-school plan should be reviewed in order to give clear guidance on the development and progression of pupils’ oral language skills throughout the school.
1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING

- The quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good. Pupils in all classes admirably express the sense of pleasure and enjoyment they get from their learning in English. In lessons observed, pupils’ emotional and cognitive development was effectively developed and nurtured through language.
- Pupils at all levels derive very high levels of enjoyment from opportunities provided to deeply engage with a broad range of poetry. In a focus-group interview conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils capably reflected on the range of poetry they have explored and comprehensively articulated the benefit of such work. In junior classes, pupils recited a wide repertoire of poems and rhymes with delight. Further use of poetry as a means to extend pupils’ auditory memory in middle and senior classes is advised.
- Pupils at all levels benefit from the broad variety of texts available in the school including a rich range of graded readers, library books and digital texts. In senior classes, pupils derive particular satisfaction from opportunities to read from a structured online programme. Further exploration of digital texts as a reading medium across the school is encouraged.
- Pupils engage actively and collaboratively in analysing, interpreting and constructing meaning across a variety of texts. The explicit modelling of skills and think-aloud processes promoted by teachers facilitates pupils to achieve very high quality outcomes in the development of their writing skills across a range of genres.
- Pupils demonstrate a keen understanding of many conventions of writing and grammar. They are highly praised for the attention they place on the organisation and presentation of their written work. Of particular note are the opportunities that exist for pupils to write for authentic audiences including their school buddy and pen pals. This is highly praised.
- Pupils have access to a broad range of information and communication technologies (ICT) resources which they use to produce, edit and present projects. Pupils’ learning in English is integrated across the curriculum through the many worthwhile opportunities that they get to collaboratively create projects.

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

- The quality of teaching is very good overall. Teachers model very strong enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning and create a vibrant culture in which the learning of English can flourish. They prepare bright inviting language-learning environments which support, and affirm pupil learning. Opportunities for pupils to experience the joy of language through their work in Drama is highly commended. Teachers use ICT to very good effect in extending and enhancing learner experiences.
- A comprehensive whole-school approach to the preparation of short and long term planning, and the recording of monthly progress reports is in place.
- Pupils’ work is carefully monitored by teachers with many examples of highly detailed formative feedback to inform their future learning. Teachers have high expectations of pupils and due care is taken to ensure that they have clarity about the purpose and goal of their learning activities.
- Stimulating and child-centred learning tasks are selected based on pupils’ interests and curiosities. A variety of methodologies was observed during the evaluation including guided and discovery based learning, collaborative learning and the use of playful learning experiences.
• Teachers are highly cognisant of the range of pupil needs and abilities within the classroom. A structured, focused approach is taken to the presentation of new material. Teachers continuously monitor the development of pupils’ understanding and they deliver lessons which tackle difficult concepts in small steps, elaborating and exemplifying as required. In collaboration with special education teachers, specific literacy initiatives are organised for individual and groups of pupils in response to their identified needs.

• A range of assessment strategies is used to assess pupils’ learning in English. These include teacher observation, teacher questioning, teacher-designed rubrics and samples of pupils’ work. Pupils also engage in self-assessment of their written work to enable them become active agents in their own learning. The school is advised to further develop pupils’ writing portfolios in order to capture the range of work that pupils have completed in English as well as to inform pupils of their progress in learning.

• Teachers value and engage in professional development and collaboration. They view collaboration as a means to improve pupil learning and to enhance their own professional development. The further sharing of very good practice in planning and assessment will lead to the identification and enhancement of whole-school approaches to these areas.

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

• The quality of whole-school planning, including SSE has been effective in progressing pupils’ learning. The school has engaged positively with school self-evaluation processes. Pupil, parent and teacher perspectives on specific aspects of literacy have been sought and the school has completed the annual regulatory checklist. Specific areas of focus have been identified including handwriting and vocabulary development and actions have been taken to address these areas. The impact and success of this work is evident in pupils’ work and has been effectively implemented across the school.

• This whole-school plan provides good guidance on some of the recent literacy initiatives in place in the school and successfully informs practice. Scope exists to develop the whole-school plan in order to guide the progression and development of pupils’ oral language skills throughout the school.
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>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 <strong>very good</strong> 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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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 and staff of Ballygown National School welcome the curriculum evaluation of English. We are delighted with the very positive findings of the report and appreciate the affirmation of the quality of teaching and learning in our school.

The report recognises the very high levels of enjoyment our pupils derive from their learning in English. We endeavor to continue giving them varied and meaningful opportunities to develop their use of language. The report also affirms the wide variety of texts that our pupils have access to including library books, graded readers and digital texts. These contribute most positively to our pupils’ literacy experiences.

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 Board of Management and Staff are pleased to accept the recommendations made in the report. We have already initiated measures to address these recommendations. The pupils’ writing portfolios will be developed as an assessment tool to direct teaching and learning in English.

Further collaboration amongst teachers of good practice in planning and assessment throughout the school will be ensured by the provision for sharing and evaluation at planning meetings. We are committed to reviewing the whole school plan in the short term, to document and direct the development and progression of oral language throughout the school.