Curriculum Evaluation

REPORT

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<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Rathcor National School</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Rathcor  
Riverstown  
Dundalk  
County Louth |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 18471P |

Date of inspection: 28-11-2018
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 inspector 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 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  28-11-2018

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
Rathcor National School is a co-educational rural primary school on the Cooley Peninsula in County Louth. The school is under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Archbishop of Armagh. There are three mainstream class teachers and a support teacher who is shared with another local school on the school staff. At the time of the evaluation 67 pupils were enrolled.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- The quality of pupils’ learning in History is good.
- The quality of curriculum leadership in respect of History is very good.
- Assessment of learning and assessment for learning practices in History are being implemented; there is scope for these to be developed further across the school.
- Overall, the teaching of History is commendable.
- Very effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) is supporting the teaching of History; there is scope for this to embed more fully school wide.
- During the evaluation it was strongly evident that pupils enjoy their history lessons.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Assessment strategies currently embedded at different class levels should be implemented and embedded consistently across the school as a whole.
- The use of ICT to support the teaching of History should now be extended.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning in History is good. Pupils enjoy their learning in History, are motivated to learn and their overall attainment is improving or is at a good standard in accordance with the learning outcomes of the Primary School Curriculum. During the evaluation pupils demonstrated a well-developed understanding of their family history and related themes, and the history of their locality. Overall, their responses to questions asked of them indicated the quality of their understanding of different topics ranged from commendable to very good.

The pupils demonstrate a clear understanding of the concepts of time and chronology and know and understand a range of stories, myths and legends. They have engaged in substantial and worthwhile project work on ancient people and ancient societies; their recall of detail
surrounding these topics, and their insight into related themes, especially among older pupils were commendable. During the evaluation, pupils strongly expressed their satisfaction about learning History and the quality of their lessons and opportunities for project work.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
Good quality learner experiences are provided for pupils in History. Attractive displays in the school support pupils’ learning in the subject. Visits to local places of historic interest support learning and, during discussion, pupils reported that they enjoy these activities immensely. The teaching of history lessons overall is commendable. During the evaluation all lessons observed were well resourced. The structure and pace of lessons were effective. Good use of artefacts stimulated discussion and facilitated the extension of pupils’ knowledge. Effective questioning strategies helped to reinforce understanding of topics and enabled teachers to build on previous learning. Some lessons in their entirety and a range of features of all lessons, were at a very good standard. Among the other good practices which were impacting successfully on learning included teachers using ICT in innovative and extended ways to convey new information to pupils and using artefacts and photographs to stimulate pupils’ interest. The use of ICT to support the teaching of History should now be extended further across every classroom. Assessment of learning and assessment for learning practices in History are being implemented. The use of checklists provides teachers and leadership with a good overview of the progression in pupils’ learning; there is scope for these approaches to be embedded further across the school.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of the leadership of learning in respect of History is very good. The quality of the whole school plan for History is very good with the plan providing very clear guidance to teachers on delivering a broad and balanced curriculum and on how the skills of working as an historian are to be developed. Classroom planning for History is commendable overall. In the context of a multi-grade setting there is scope for class-level differentiation of content objectives to be clearer in some planning.
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 of Rathcor NS welcomes the positive History inspection report. The report acknowledges the hard work and dedication of the school staff and management. The report outlines and affirms the high quality of teaching, learning and leadership within the school. In particular, the Board of Management is pleased with reference to the following points contained in the report.

The teaching of History is commendable.

The quality of Curriculum leadership in respect of History is very good.

Very effective use of information and communications technology (ICT) is supporting the teaching of History.

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 welcomes and accepts the recommendations contained within this report. The staff will continue to review and improve class level differentiation of content objectives as they appear in planning. The staff will continue to further the use of checklists which provide teachers and leadership with a good view of the progression of pupils’ learning. The Board of Management, in conjunction with the wider school community, will make the necessary arrangements to provide additional ICT equipment to meet the report’s recommendation.
Inspection reports 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>Very good 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>Good 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>Satisfactory 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>Fair 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>Weak 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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