# Curriculum Evaluation

## History

### REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Mhuire</th>
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| Seoladh na scoile / School address | Dristearnain  
Gleneely  
Inishowen  
County Donegal |
| Uimhir rolla / Roll number | 18517N |

Date of inspection: 19-04-2018
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(s) 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  19-04-2018

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
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<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
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<td>• Pupil focus-group interview</td>
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<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
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<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
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<td>• Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Mhuire is a rural, co-educational primary school under the patronage of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Derry. The school participates in the Delivering of Equality of Opportunities in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. There are 121 pupils enrolled across five classrooms.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
• The overall learning achievements of pupils is very good in History; pupils enjoyed their learning and demonstrated high levels of engagement in the lessons observed.
• The quality of learning experiences is very good and pupils discuss and collaborate very well during lessons.
• The quality of teaching is very good in the subject with teachers facilitating appropriate and meaningful pupil engagement.
• The quality of assessment is good overall with teachers maintaining assessment records of knowledge acquired and useful samples of pupils’ work in the subject; there is scope to develop assessment of pupils’ skills and pupil self-assessment.
• The overall quality of school planning is good; the whole-school plan does not provide guidance to individual teachers in the development of the literacy relevant to History.

RECOMMENDATIONS
• Ways to assess pupils’ skills appropriately and a more focused use of pupil self-assessment should be agreed and implemented so as to provide for optimum continuity and progression in history learning from class to class.
• In reviewing the whole-school plan, more specific guidance should be given as to how subject literacy will be developed at each class level, thereby helping to better inform teachers’ short-term planning.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning in History is very good. Pupils enjoy their lessons and demonstrated high levels of engagement during the lessons observed. Pupils demonstrated a very good knowledge of local history and a very high level of understanding of the concepts of change and continuity, early people and ancient societies and eras of change and conflict. Pupils have undertaken a range of collaborative projects, completed to a very good standard with appropriate cross-curricular integration. Pupils in junior classrooms have opportunities to learn through integrated and structured play. Generally, pupils have regular opportunities to engage
with local people in the community who share their knowledge and expertise with them. Pupils are engaged in an inter-school initiative with a clear focus on History within the curriculum for Social Environmental and Scientific Education. During the lessons observed, all pupils were provided with very appropriate opportunities to engage in activity-based learning on a collaborative basis with clearly outlined roles and responsibilities. In a focus-group interview, pupils reported that they enjoy their learning, particularly working in groups and having opportunities to present their learning for other pupils, teachers and parents.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
The quality of learning experiences provided to pupils in History is very good. Classroom displays promote and support learning very well with a very good emphasis on the display of artefacts relevant to lesson topics. Highly respectful interactions were observed between pupils and their teachers and between pupils and their peers. They had opportunities to consider relevant resources, including information and communication technologies (ICT), to support their learning. Pupil discussion was facilitated very well during learning. They were encouraged regularly to express their views during lessons. During the pupil focus group discussion, pupils reported that they would like more concentrated use of artefacts during learning activities.

The overall quality of teaching is very good. The structure and pace of lessons were found to be very good in all settings. Vibrant and contextualised timelines were displayed in all classrooms. Teachers used very good questioning skills during teaching to ascertain knowledge and to scaffold good-quality pupil responses. They used curriculum-appropriate teaching approaches including the use of story, personal and family history, evidence, pictures and photographs, role-play and ICT very well. All teachers adopted inclusive strategies during teaching to ensure that all pupils were meaningfully engaged, including the use of differentiated learning activities.

Teachers prepare very good resources in advance of their teaching to generate enthusiasm. Overall, their planning for teaching and learning in the subject is effective; an increased emphasis on oral language development and skills development in teachers’ short-term planning would enhance current provision.

The overall quality of assessment is good. All teachers maintain useful assessment records of pupils’ knowledge and samples of work, and have identified the varying levels of ability within each classroom. Ways to assess pupils’ skills appropriately should be agreed and implemented so as to provide for optimum continuity and progression in history learning from class to class. Worthwhile learning logs are maintained by pupils from infants to sixth class which contain pupil-selected samples of work. Pupils would benefit from a more focused approach to self-assessment including setting their own learning targets where relevant.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of whole-school planning, including school self-evaluation (SSE) and DEIS, is good overall. SSE and DEIS planning contains appropriate targets for parental involvement, school visits and oral language development. School leaders promote a culture of improvement, collaboration and creativity in teaching and learning.

The whole-school plan for History includes a useful appendix of identified local areas and buildings of historical significance. It would be of benefit to include a whole-school approach to
the development of the literacy for History for each class level to enhance current DEIS targets. An audit of the centrally managed school artefacts should also be detailed in the plan.
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 Scoil Mhuire finds the report very positive and affirming of the standard of teaching and learning of History in our school. The board is pleased that so many of the school’s strengths were highlighted and we appreciate the guidance on how we can further develop the high standard of history provision in the school.

Part B: Follow-up actions planned or undertaken since the completion of the inspection activity to implement the findings and recommendations of the inspection

- Regarding the recommendations made in the report, we intend to review the whole-school plan and together we will follow a whole-school approach to the development of the literacy for History by outlining the language to be taught at each level. Teachers will refer to this when planning for History for their classes.
- The school staff will liaise more closely on identifying the skills development expected from each class. Teachers will ensure that short-term plans not only identify the content of their history lesson but also the skills they intend to teach. The assessment of skills learned will be monitored using a checklist so as to provide for optimum continuity and progression in history learning from class to class.
- Pupils will be further supported to engage with purposeful self-assessment at each class level – the use of rubrics will be encouraged.
- We have already added an audit of history resources centrally stored to the appendix of our whole-school history plan.
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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<thead>
<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 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>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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