

**An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna**  
**Department of Education and Skills**

**Curriculum Evaluation**  
**English**

**REPORT**

|   |   |
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| <b>Ainm na scoile /<br/>School name</b>       | Scoil Náisiúnta an tSlánaitheora Buachaillí |
| <b>Seoladh na scoile /<br/>School address</b> | Ard Easmuinn<br>Dundalk<br>County Louth     |
| <b>Uimhir rolla /<br/>Roll number</b>         | 19246N                                      |

**Date of inspection: 07-11-2019**



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agus Scileanna**  
Department of  
Education and Skills

## **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 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

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|---|---|
| <b>Date of inspection</b>   | 07-11-2019  |
| <b>Inspection activities undertaken</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Discussion with principal and teachers</li><li>• Review of relevant documents</li><li>• Pupil focus-group interview</li></ul> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Observation of teaching and learning</li><li>• Examination of pupils' work</li><li>• Interaction with pupils</li><li>• Feedback to principal and teachers</li></ul> |

### SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Náisiúnta an tSlánaitheora Buachaillí is an urban school located in Dundalk, County Louth catering for boys from junior infants to sixth class and which includes two special classes for pupils with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). The school operates under the patronage of the Archdiocese of Armagh and participates in Band 1 of Delivering Equality of Opportunity in Schools (DEIS), the action plan of the Department of Education and Skills for educational inclusion. Staffing includes an administrative principal, seven mainstream class teachers, four teachers for pupils with special educational needs (SEN) and a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) coordinator. 107 pupils are currently enrolled in the school.

### SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

#### FINDINGS

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is good; pupils display high levels of interest, enthusiasm and engagement in lessons most notably reading lessons.
- The overall quality of teaching in English is good with a few instances of very good practice observed; scope remains to teach a broader range of writing genre and oral language text-types.
- A special education teacher is deployed currently as a mainstream class teacher and this deployment is in breach of the terms of the Circular 0013/2017.
- Assessment practices are good overall; while assessment data is used well to inform the selection of differentiated reading materials and teaching approaches for reading, the assessment of writing and oral language requires further development.
- All teachers demonstrated very successful classroom management skills.
- The principal and in-school management team demonstrate very successful curricular leadership for literacy.

#### RECOMMENDATIONS

- The school should ensure that teaching posts allocated for special education needs teaching are deployed in accordance with Circular 0013/2017.
- The incremental development of a broader range of writing genres and communication skills for oral language across the school is advised.
- A review of the school's assessment practices for writing and oral language is required to more effectively inform teaching and learning.

## **DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

### **1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING**

The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is good. In almost all settings, pupils presented as enthusiastic, motivated and engaged learners. During the focus group discussion, conducted as part of the evaluation, pupils spoke very positively about how they enjoy their English lessons. In most instances, pupils demonstrate a very good oral language capacity to break down words and use a range of comprehension strategies and generally pupils' confidence and competence to read is good. Commendably, all reading lessons observed during the evaluation were characterised by purposeful collaborative learning in which pupils worked together to ask effective questions, to discuss and negotiate text as they read. Teachers listen to pupils' reading regularly though guided reading sessions. During the inspection, in most settings, many pupils were observed to read with appropriate fluency and a degree of expression. The whole-school approach to developing pupils' vocabulary is effective throughout the school; pupils are actively involved in choosing new interesting words from reading material and enjoy using these words in context for oral language and writing activities.

The writing process is embedded across the school and samples of pupils' work are generally of a good quality. However, the range of writing genres in which pupils write is limited and the application of language structures to writing on an incremental basis requires development. More explicit focus should be placed on developing a broader range of writing genres on an incremental basis throughout the school and on challenging pupils to apply the specific language and skills relevant to each genre to their written work. While very meaningful opportunities are provided for pupils to discuss and collaborate in order to develop skills for reading and writing skills, greater attention to the skills of communicating for a wider range of purposes is advised.

### **2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE**

The quality of pupils' learning experiences in English is good. Vocabulary-rich learning environments and samples of pupils' work are displayed throughout the school to very good effect. Pupils are afforded regular opportunities to engage in a broad range of learning experiences, including meaningful collaborative work, shared reading activities and personal reading. Pupils who participated in the focus group discussion described how they enjoy their teacher reading aloud to them. Talk and discussion were central to all reading and writing lessons observed. Respectful interactions between teachers and pupils were in evidence during the evaluation and pupils in the focus group discussion reported how well they are cared for, supported and challenged by the staff of the school.

The overall quality of teaching in mainstream and support settings is high. During the evaluation, the quality of teaching observed ranged from satisfactory to very good. In a minority of settings, teaching was not pitched appropriately, lessons lacked a clear focus for learning and insufficient time was spent modelling skills to enable successful learning. Where highly effective practice was noted, lessons were well-structured, clear learning outcomes were communicated competently and meaningful opportunities for pupils to actively engage, understand, consolidate and apply new learning were provided. These very effective practices should be embedded in all learning settings. Teachers work collaboratively and share expertise within the school to successfully coordinate whole-school approaches to the teaching of reading. This is having a positive impact on pupils' learning. Staff trained in other DEIS initiatives for literacy should now be enabled to further develop writing and oral language skills complementary to the development of reading. All teachers demonstrated very successful classroom management skills. A special education teacher is deployed

currently as a mainstream class teacher and this deployment is in breach of the terms of the Circular 0013/2017. The school should ensure that teaching posts allocated for special education needs teaching are deployed in accordance with Circular 0013/2017.

The overall quality of assessment is good. A whole-school approach is in place for the maintenance of classroom assessment files. Reading is assessed effectively through the use and interpretation of running records, standardised testing and vocabulary assessments. Pupils in the focus group discussion reported how much they value feedback provided by the teacher on their learning. Copybooks are well monitored; some very good examples of formative feedback were noted in a minority of settings. An agreed whole-school approach to the monitoring, correction and feedback in relation to pupils' written and oral work should be further developed. Assessment data is gathered and analysed to inform teaching in mainstream lessons, team-teaching lessons and pupil withdrawal lessons. In a minority of instances, assessment data was not utilised effectively to inform teaching and learning to meet the prioritised learning needs of pupils and subsequently teaching was not aligned accordingly. A review of the school's assessment practices for writing and oral language is required to more effectively inform teaching and learning.

### **3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS' LEARNING**

The quality of school planning is good overall. The whole-school plan provides very clear and valuable guidance for teachers on the whole-school approach to reading and this is reflected in teachers' short-term planning documents. The school plan is currently being developed further to provide clearer structure and guidance to teachers on whole-school approaches to developing oral language and writing. The school self-evaluation planning process is impacting positively on pupils' reading and spelling, however, the school should now look to focus on developing targets to implement an increased skills based approach to the development of pupils' writing and oral language. The principal and in-school management team demonstrate very successful curricular leadership for literacy.

# **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 Redeemer Boys' N.S. welcomes the positive findings of this recent evaluation and feels it has been an affirming experience for the whole school community. The Board is delighted to acknowledge the good quality of teaching and learning and very successful curricular leadership for literacy that was highlighted during the course of the visit.

### **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 of Redeemer Boys' N.S. acknowledge the recommendations outlined in the report and undertake to address them as follows:

- We confirm that the recommendations in relation to Circular 0013/2017 have been implemented.
- We acknowledge the need to develop a broader range of writing genres and communication skills for oral language across the school. Teachers will hold professional discussions and plan collaboratively in this regard to ensure the best possible outcomes for pupils. By engaging with the new Primary Language Curriculum, the Write to Read support model and other literacy initiatives pupils' learning will be enriched in the areas identified.
- We are reviewing the school's assessment practices in line with the recommendations from the inspectorate.

Táimid fíor bhuíoch mar bhord do na moltaí atá faighte againn agus ag dúil go mór le iad a chur i gcrích gan mhoill.

## 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.

| Level               | Description   | Example of descriptive terms  |
|---------------------|---|---|
| <b>Very Good</b>    | <b>Very good</b> 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 <b>outstanding</b> and provides an example for other schools of exceptionally high standards of provision. | 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 |
| <b>Good</b>         | <b>Good</b> 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 <i>very good</i> standard.                             | Good; good quality; valuable; effective practice; competent; useful; commendable; good standard; some areas for improvement   |
| <b>Satisfactory</b> | <b>Satisfactory</b> 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.   | Satisfactory; adequate; appropriate provision although some possibilities for improvement exist; acceptable level of quality; improvement needed in some areas  |
| <b>Fair</b>         | <b>Fair</b> 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.   | Fair; evident weaknesses that are impacting on pupils' learning; less than satisfactory; experiencing difficulty; must improve in specified areas; action required to improve   |
| <b>Weak</b>         | <b>Weak</b> 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.  | Weak; unsatisfactory; insufficient; ineffective; poor; requiring significant change, development or improvement; experiencing significant difficulties;   |