Curriculum Evaluation

English

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Aínm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Aiséirí Chriost</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Farranree, Cork.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>20038N</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Date of inspection: 23-02-2018
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 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 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.
Curriculum Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date of inspection</th>
<th>23-02-2018</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Inspection activities undertaken</td>
<td>Pupil focus-group interview</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>Observation of teaching and learning</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meeting with representatives of the literacy team</td>
<td>Examination of pupils’ work</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>Interaction with pupils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

SCHOOL CONTEXT
Scoil Aiséirí Chríost is a primary school for girls, situated in Cork City. It operates under the patronage of the Catholic Bishop of Cork and Ross and under the trusteeship of the Presentation Sisters. There are eighteen mainstream class teachers, six support teachers and a home-school-community liaison (HSCL) officer. The school participates in the Delivering Equality of Opportunity for Schools (DEIS) programme. 334 pupils were enrolled at the time of the evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS
- The quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good and the school has experienced significant success in raising literacy standards.
- Learning experiences provided for the pupils are of a very high quality and the pupils present as highly motivated learners.
- While some use is made of information and communications technology (ICT) to support and develop pupils’ learning, there is scope to extend the use of digital technologies.
- The overall quality of teaching is very good and teachers have high learning expectations for their pupils.
- Practice in assessment is excellent and whole-school assessment underpins the work in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process.
- School management successfully promotes a culture of school improvement in English.

RECOMMENDATIONS
- The school should make increased provision for the use of digital technologies to further enhance learning opportunities for pupils.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good. The school has experienced significant success in raising literacy standards. The principal and in-school management team hold high expectations for pupil learning and together with teachers they plan and implement a very broad range of initiatives to maximise learning outcomes. The pupils are aware of the expectations set for them and in many instances, they contribute to setting their own learning goals. A literacy log, completed on a monthly basis, provides a comprehensive whole-school account of learning in literacy and records the implementation of selected teaching strategies in identified areas of focus. Key literacy skills are developed systematically, consolidated and
refined as pupils progress through the school. This orderly progression in learning is underpinned by the consistent implementation of agreed whole-school approaches across the strands of the curriculum for English.

The pupils are highly motivated. They enjoy frequent opportunities to explore and respond to the creative and imaginative aspects of language using tongue twisters, exploring sounds and writing poetry. The development of their reading skills is carefully nurtured and all pupils are enthusiastic in describing their experience in reading. Significant emphasis is placed on supporting pupils’ exploration of writing genres and their journey through writing genres is both systematic and developmental. The quality of handwriting and presentation of work in copybooks is excellent. The learning outcomes achieved in the lessons observed were very good.

The pupils are aware that their opinions are valued and are confident in describing their learning. In the focus-group interview, the pupils expressed their views and opinions in a most articulate manner. They conveyed great enthusiasm for learning. They described visual supports in classrooms which included prompt cards and posters on grammar and writing genres. They reported on the manner in which they receive feedback on their learning and described their personal goal-setting for English. These pupils conveyed significant enthusiasm for reading and ably described a range of interesting authors. A significant aspect of the focus group interview was the pupils’ capacity to engage with the process and to confidently convey an account of their learning in English.

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

Very high quality learning experiences are provided for the pupils and they demonstrate high levels of interest and participation in their learning. They work purposefully and in a productive manner and enjoy a broad range of learning experiences. An appropriate balance is achieved between individual and collective tasks and the pupils are afforded frequent opportunities to think and to work independently. Where collaborative activities are undertaken, roles are assigned within learning groups, thereby ensuring purposeful engagement by all pupils. Speaker-listener relationships are successfully established and respectful pupil-pupil interactions were observed during the evaluation.

Classrooms present as stimulating, print-rich learning environments featuring conversation stations throughout. Word walls are used in all classes. Samples of pupils’ writing across the genres and in a range of curricular areas are displayed. Class libraries are well stocked and weekly visits to the school library are scheduled for all classes.

The pupils’ learning experience is enhanced through parental involvement in programmes such as Happy Talk and Story Sacks and through the One Book, One Community initiative. While some use is made of information and communications technology (ICT), there is scope to extend the pupils’ use of digital technologies to support their learning in English.

The overall quality of teaching is very good. Teachers’ individual practice is directed by a cohesive, structured whole-school plan. A culture of collaboration permeates practice, thereby facilitating consistency across class levels. Teachers are successful in using the pupils’ interests to create meaningful learning contexts. They successfully model enthusiasm and enjoyment in learning and use a high register of language in lessons.
Teachers provide an equitable learning experience for pupils throughout the school and the quality of their collective practice is excellent. They implement an array of agreed practice; on the monitoring of pupils’ work in copybooks and the provision of feedback; on progression in grammar; on oral language targets and on the development of writing abilities. There is a consistent whole-school focus on the advancement of literacy skills across the curriculum, most notably in Social, Environmental and Scientific Education (SESE).

Practice in assessment is excellent. The whole-school plan for assessment has been recently reviewed and now documents the broad range of assessments undertaken in English. A detailed analysis of the outcomes of standardised testing informs the selection of programmes of intervention and the implementation of preventative strategies for junior pupils. All teachers maintain detailed folders on assessment which include a structured monitoring of attainment for targeted pupils in all classrooms. The outcomes of class-based assessment guides differentiated provision in mainstream classrooms. Whole-school assessment data provides very clear direction for SSE.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The quality of school planning, including SSE is very effective in progressing pupils’ learning. School management promotes a culture of improvement through collaboration, innovation and creativity in teaching and learning. High levels of in-school communication ensure that the English plan is successfully and consistently implemented. An established practice in teacher collaboration and more recent practice in teacher conferencing ensures the systematic implementation of targeted areas for improvement in literacy. Consistently high levels of teacher participation in continued professional development influence teacher planning. Croke Park hours provide frequent opportunities for focused literacy group meetings, class level collaboration and for professional evaluation of and reflection on current initiatives. Each teacher is equipped with a literacy folder covering all of the literacy components for their class levels along with the current literacy improvement plan. Classroom planning is underpinned by these resources and consequently incremental development of pupil attainment in English is ensured as they progress through the school.

School management successfully promotes a culture of improvement. Teachers are encouraged to monitor and, amend when necessary, the modes of assessment used for oral language in classrooms. Developments in pupils’ learning and the acquisition of skills in English are recorded consistently in monthly progress reports and staff meetings are used to evaluate the success of current interventions. The implementation of SSE initiatives is impacting in a most positive manner on pupil-learning outcomes in English.

4. CHILD PROTECTION
During the evaluation, the following checks in relation to the school’s child protection procedures were conducted:

1. The school principal is aware that revised child protection procedures for primary and post-primary schools came into effect on 11 December 2017 and arrangements are in place to begin the process of implementing these procedures.
2. The name of the designated liaison person for child protection matters was prominently displayed in the school’s reception area.
3. The school has a Child Safeguarding Statement in place.
4. All teachers are aware that they are mandated persons and of their responsibilities in that regard.

The school met the requirements in relation to each of the checks above.
**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.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<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 <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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
<tr>
<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>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Area 1  Observations on the content of the inspection report

The Board of Management welcomes the publication of this very positive Curriculum Evaluation Report on the teaching of English in Scoil Aiséirí Chríost. The Board welcomes the Inspectorates’ acknowledgement that the school has experienced significant success in raising literacy standards and successfully promotes a culture of improvement in English. The Board of Management and school staff are committed to the on-going process of continuous improvement to the benefit of the pupils and the community that the school serves.

Area 2  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 accepts and welcomes the recommendation in this Report. The School teaching team have identified the initial steps to be undertaken to deliver an increased provision for the use of digital technologies to further enhance learning opportunities for our pupils. The targets to be met are set out below:

1. Review IT milestones for each class level as documented in class Assessment Folder.
   - Identify the appropriate milestones
   - Identify the subject area(s) where these milestones can best be met
2. Provide access to a coloured printer in the school’s Computer Room to enable pupils to publish their work for display
3. Expose and direct pupils to safe websites to develop their digital literacy skills, enabling them to navigate across multiple sites independently, thus locating information effectively.