An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
English

REPORT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Ainm na scoile / School name</th>
<th>Scoil Mhuire</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>20062K</td>
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Date of Evaluation: 03-04-2017
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 learning 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.
INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

<table>
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<tr>
<th>Date of Inspection</th>
<th>03-04-2017</th>
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| Inspection activities undertaken | • Observation of teaching and learning  
• Examination of pupils’ work  
• Interaction with pupils  
• Feedback to the acting principal and teachers |
• Discussion with the acting principal and teachers  
• Review of relevant documents  
• Pupil focus-group interview |

SCHOOL CONTEXT

Scoil Mhuire is a co-educational primary school located in Borrisokane, Co. Tipperary. The school has a teaching principal and five mainstream class teachers. A learning support teacher and a resource teacher are based in the school. Two other resource teachers are based in neighbouring schools. There were 101 pupils enrolled in the school at the time of this evaluation.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

• Overall, pupils’ learning achievements in English are good. However, pupils’ competence and confidence in oral language requires improvement.
• The overall quality of teaching in mainstream and support settings is commendable. Further opportunities to develop pupil voice in all settings would enhance pupils’ learning experiences.
• In-class models of support teaching have been introduced and are impacting positively on pupils’ learning. An extension of this model to all classes would further support the learning needs of all pupils.
• The whole-school plan for English requires review.
• The school has engaged in the school self-evaluation (SSE) process. Assessment data requires more robust analysis in order to inform school improvement planning.

RECOMMENDATIONS

• The school plan for English should inform and reflect practice in the teaching of English. This should include a whole school plan for the development of pupils’ oral language skills, to include vocabulary development.
• Opportunities should be provided for pupils to practise and use the language taught, to discuss their learning and to develop their oral presentation skills.
• In-class models of support, aligned to pupils’ prioritised learning needs, should be further developed in order to facilitate focused and differentiated literacy instruction.
• Further analysis of assessment data in English should be conducted. This should be used to formulate specific and measurable targets in the school improvement plan for literacy. These targets should be reviewed annually.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS’ LEARNING IN ENGLISH

The overall quality of pupils’ learning achievements in English, including pupils with special educational needs, is good. Most pupils engaged well with learning tasks and demonstrated an interest in their work during the evaluation. Pupils in the focus group indicated that they enjoy their learning in English.

The development of pupils’ early literacy skills is highly commendable. Pupils’ phonological awareness, letter and word recognition, word attack and emergent writing skills are of a very good quality in infant and junior classes.

The majority of pupils recite a broad repertoire of poetry and rhymes. This should be extended to all classes. There was evidence of highly commendable emphasis on vocabulary development and listening skills in a small number of lessons. However, pupils’ oral communication skills require development in the majority of settings.

Most pupils read with age-appropriate fluency and understanding. As indicated in responses to the focus-group interview, pupils enjoy the use of novels in middle and senior classes.

The creative writing standards of the majority of pupils are of a good quality. The whole-school focus on spelling is having a positive impact on pupils’ learning outcomes. The quality of pupils’ handwriting and presentation of work is good overall, with evidence of some very good practice. There is scope for improvement in a few settings.

Pupils’ learning in English is supported effectively through participation in library events, spelling and handwriting competitions, poetry and drama activities.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING IN SUBJECT: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE

The quality of support for pupils’ learning in English is good. The quality of teaching in the lessons observed in all settings ranged from satisfactory to very good. Practice was effective where there were clear learning objectives, development of pupils’ skills and the use of tasks designed to ensure effective pupil engagement. Further opportunities to engage and challenge pupils to a greater extent should be explored in the majority of settings.

The use of collaborative work was observed in all settings. However, more opportunities for pupils to use and develop their oral communication skills is required in the majority of settings. Purposeful, meaningful activities should be used to extend pupils’ confidence and competence in using language.

Positive, respectful and affirming interactions were observed in all settings. Teachers’ classroom management skills are highly commendable and pupils’ behaviour during the evaluation was exemplary.
Classroom environments, in the majority of settings, were supportive of pupils’ learning. The use of word walls, print-rich environments and displays of pupils’ work in English should be extended to all settings.

Collaborative planning practices to support in-class support teaching are very effective. The use of a common short-term planning template is commendable. Further refinement of short-term planning should focus on ensuring that objectives are clearly stated in terms of expected learning outcomes.

The introduction of the Literacy Lift-Off initiative is having a positive impact on pupils’ learning outcomes in English. The novel is explored appropriately in middle and senior classes. Building on these good practices, the use of differentiated texts in middle and senior classes is recommended to develop pupils’ reading and comprehension skills. The further development of in-class models of support teaching would facilitate the provision of differentiated, small group literacy instruction.

Free writing tasks are facilitated in all settings. This practice is highly commendable. Greater emphasis on the teaching of the writing process would scaffold pupils’ learning in relation to the writing genres. Linkage between oral and written communication activities should be established to further support pupils’ learning.

A variety of practices is used to assess pupils’ progress in English: including checklists, pupil profiles, teacher-designed tests and standardised tests. Assessment for learning practices observed included rubrics, self-assessment and reflection. The use of formative assessment should be extended in most settings to support pupils in the further development of their work. To enable all pupils to work according to their level of ability, assessment data should be used to inform the planning of differentiated activities.

Individual education plans and individual profile and learning programmes were in place for all pupils in receipt of support. However, targets need to be specific, measurable and time-bound to ensure progression in pupils’ learning. Targets should be monitored closely and reviewed regularly. It is recommended that the National Educational Psychological Service (NEPS) Continuum of Support documents be used to support this work.

Information and communications technology (ICT) was used as a teaching resource in the majority of the lessons observed. However, there is scope to develop its use as a learning tool in all settings. Pupils in the focus group indicated that they use ICT as a learning tool in a few lessons.

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

The quality of school planning for English is satisfactory. Greater guidance should be provided in the whole-school plan in relation to whole-school approaches for the teaching of reading skills, comprehension skills and the writing genres.

A whole-school approach to the development of pupils’ oral language, including vocabulary development and oral communication and presentation skills, should be agreed, documented and implemented.
The school has engaged in the SSE process and a school improvement plan for literacy has been devised. However, specific and measurable targets, which are based on more rigorous analysis of school assessment data, should be identified. These targets should be monitored closely and reviewed annually.
Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management
Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

We are happy that the recommendations are practical and achievable, and that the report on work practices already in place are very positive.

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 whole school plan for English will be reviewed in September which will include:
(i) How we will implement the Primary Language Curriculum
(ii) Development of pupils’ oral language skills including vocabulary development

In-class models of support will be continued and further developed.

Teachers will continue to engage in CPD to enhance all areas of the English curriculum. A member of staff is applying for a graduate diploma in SEN.

All of the staff found the evaluation to be very useful for the SSE process in English.

Staff look forward to implementing the recommendations and building on the good practices already in place.
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 the school’s provision of each area.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Description</th>
<th>Example of descriptive terms</th>
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<td>Very Good</td>
<td><em>Very good</em> 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 <em>outstanding</em> 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><em>Good</em> 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 <em>very good</em> 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><em>Satisfactory</em> 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><em>Fair</em> 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><em>Weak</em> 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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