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>Pelletstown ETNS</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Seoladh na scoile / School address</td>
<td>Ashtown Road, Rathborne, Dublin 15.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Uimhir rolla / Roll number</td>
<td>20392I</td>
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Date of inspection: 18-01-2018
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 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 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.
Curriculum Evaluation

Date of inspection  18-01-2018

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<tr>
<th>Inspection activities undertaken</th>
<th>Observation of teaching and learning</th>
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<tr>
<td>• Discussion with principal and teachers</td>
<td>• Examination of pupils’ work</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Review of relevant documents</td>
<td>• Interaction with pupils</td>
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<tr>
<td>• Observation of teaching and learning</td>
<td>• Feedback to principal and teachers</td>
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SCHOOL CONTEXT
Pelletstown Educate Together National School is a co-educational vertical school operating under the patronage of Educate Together. The school was established in 2015, and currently caters for 150 pupils from infants to first class, a significant number of whom have English as an additional language (EAL). At present, there are six mainstream class teachers, three full-time support teachers, and one part-time support teacher. The school is located in temporary accommodation in Ashtown, Rathborne in Dublin 15.

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good.
- The teaching of English in mainstream and support settings is of a very high quality.
- Teachers engage very effectively in collaborative reviews of their practice and this is impacting positively on pupils’ learning experiences.
- While some effective models of station-teaching approaches are in place, pupils’ learning activities are not cohesively linked across these stations.
- Pupils are highly motivated and enthusiastic learners, and they participate eagerly in interesting and relevant learning experiences.
- Though the whole-school plan for English guides most aspects of teaching and learning effectively, the oral language plan is not sufficiently detailed to support the incremental progression of pupils’ language competencies.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The whole-school plan for English should be reviewed to include a focus on incrementally expanding pupils’ vocabulary, sentence structure and language usage in a manner that supports their independent and competent use of the language in all settings.
- Station-teaching activities should be refined so that pupils have a cohesive learning experience across key skills in literacy, and planning for these activities should be soundly based on the analysis of assessment data.
- A review of weekly planning in support settings should focus on the setting out of very clear and incremental learning outcomes which are linked to the achievement of targets from the pupils’ support plans.
DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING
The quality of pupils’ learning in English is very good overall. In most settings, pupils were observed to be enjoying their learning experiences and they demonstrated high levels of motivation and positive dispositions to learning. Pupils’ early and emergent skills in literacy are progressing steadily across all class levels. In all learning settings, most pupils’ active listening skills, and their incremental phonological awareness, decoding and comprehension skills are being developed to a very good standard. The majority of pupils apply these strategies independently to their reading and writing with an appropriate level of competence. They confidently use play and improvisational drama to recreate stories and poems, and in all classes, pupils recite a wide range of rhymes, poems and jingles. Pupils are afforded frequent opportunities to engage orally with their peers and teachers, and they demonstrate confidence in these activities. Nonetheless, their oral competencies range from satisfactory to very good. An incremental approach to identifying and explicitly teaching target language on a whole-school basis should be developed to enhance the school’s provision. Pupils’ writing skills are developing systematically, and they have frequent opportunities to write for a range of purposes and audiences. A whole-school approach to the teaching of penmanship is impacting positively on the presentation of their work.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS’ LEARNING: LEARNER EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS’ PRACTICE
Pupils’ learning experiences in English are of a very good quality overall. Their learning is celebrated through the display of their work in classrooms and circulation areas and through oral presentations during whole-school assembly. Commendably, learning experiences are further enhanced through engagement with the local library services and by participation in book-related activities relevant to the pupils. A very wide range of effective teaching approaches, including the successful implementation of Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework, is impacting positively on the provision of integrated pupil-centred and self-directed active learning activities.

In the lessons observed, pupils had access to suitable learning resources in literacy, including a wide range of books, literacy games, concrete materials and visuals. The development of the Literacy Lift-Off initiative is commendable. While this approach is providing pupils with access to reading materials at their instructional level, there is a need to review some of the other learning activities to ensure that they are cohesively linked across the stations, and that the level of challenge is closely linked to the pupils’ learning needs.

The quality of assessment and record keeping is very good. Comprehensive and informative summative and formative profiles are carefully compiled for individuals and classes. Data from these assessments is used to identify pupils for supplementary support teaching in English. Teachers in mainstream settings provide comprehensive long-term and short-term plans. There is evidence of high levels of teacher collaboration and reviews of practice across all settings. This is particularly noted in programme planning for in-class support, and for small groups and individuals. The Continuum of Support is becoming embedded in the work of school. In the contexts where very high quality support plans were noted, targets were very specific and measureable. However, there is potential in some support settings to ensure that weekly planning for individuals builds incrementally on the targets identified for the pupils’ learning, and these plans should include a variety of strategies for their achievement. Some high quality support for pupils with additional language needs in English (EAL) was
observed. Where best practice was noted, this was characterised by language-rich, active and communicative teaching and learning methodologies. This should be developed across all EAL settings.

3. THE EFFECTIVENESS OF SCHOOL PLANNING, INCLUDING SSE, IN PROGRESSING PUPILS’ LEARNING
The school reported that it is not currently engaging in the School Self-evaluation (SSE) process due to industrial action. The school had not been in a position to commence work on the six-step process of SSE at the time of its establishment, but had begun work on drafting a range of policies to suit the school’s context at that time. A whole-school plan for English guides most aspects of teaching and learning effectively and its use impacts positively on teachers’ classroom planning. However, the oral language plan is not sufficiently detailed to support the incremental progression of pupils’ language competencies. Further development of this plan is recommended so that it will be a useful guide for teachers in all settings in implementing an incremental programme of learning for the pupils.

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 Protection policy 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.
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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<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 <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>
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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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<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>
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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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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 of Pelletstown Educate Together National School wishes to acknowledge receipt of the recent Curriculum Evaluation inspection report conducted in our school, focussing on English. The Board of Management and school staff are delighted to welcome this positive report. The report affirms the strong commitment to the teaching and learning of English in the school and acknowledges the initiatives which have been successfully implemented since the school opened in September 2015. We are pleased that the teaching of English in both mainstream and support settings was noted to be of a very high quality and that the overall quality of pupils’ learning outcomes and experiences in English is very good. The Board of Management are proud of the fact that pupils were observed to be highly motivated and enthusiastic learners, and that they participate eagerly in interesting and relevant learning experiences.

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 and staff of Pelletstown Educate Together National School acknowledge the recommendations of this report, and looks forward to the implementation of such. We believe that the recommendations outlined in the report are achievable, and will further enhance the quality of teaching and learning in our school as it grows and develops.

The whole-school English plan will be reviewed to focus on incrementally expanding pupils’ vocabulary and language competencies. Teachers are currently actively engaging with this recommendation, compiling incremental lists of vocabulary and phrases for oral language development, linked to the work already being undertaken in the school through such initiatives as Aistear and literacy team-teaching. Weekly planning templates in support settings will be reviewed to reflect the recommendations in this report, with a view to focussing on setting out very clear targets of incremental learning which are linked to the achievement targets from the pupils’ support plans. Since the undertaking of the English curriculum evaluation, station-teaching activities have been adapted and modified to reflect the recommendation of having a cohesive learning experience across key skills in literacy. The planning for such activities will continue to be based on the analysis of relevant assessment data.