

An Roinn Oideachais agus Scileanna
Department of Education and Skills

Curriculum Evaluation
English

REPORT

Ainm na scoile / School name	St Mary's Junior Boys' National School
Seoladh na scoile / School address	St Flannan's Street Nenagh Co. Tipperary
Uimhir rolla / Roll number	16344V

Date of Evaluation: 19-05-2017



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.

Curriculum Evaluation

INSPECTION ACTIVITIES DURING THIS INSPECTION

Dates of inspection	18-05-2017 to 19-05-2017
Inspection activities undertaken <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Discussion with principal• Discussion with members of in-school management team• Review of relevant documents	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Observation of teaching and learning• Examination of pupils' work• Interaction with pupils• Feedback to principal and teachers• Feedback to members of the in-school management team

SCHOOL CONTEXT

St Mary's Junior Boys' National School is situated in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary. The school has an administrative principal, seven mainstream class teachers and seven support teachers, three of whom are based in other schools. In addition to mainstream classes, the school operates a class for pupils with severe speech and language impairment (SSLI).

SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS:

FINDINGS

- Overall, the quality of pupils' learning achievements in English is good.
- Pupils' learning experiences in English are commendable. Pupils' learning through the medium of play requires further development.
- Overall, the quality of the teaching in English in mainstream classes and support settings is good.
- A mainstream teacher is currently deployed in a support teaching role. This is not in accordance with Circular Letter 0007/2016 and it means that the numbers of pupils in mainstream classes are higher than they should be.
- The whole-school plan for English guides most aspects of teaching and learning effectively. The whole-school oral language plan requires further review.
- The school self-evaluation (SSE) process had been implemented appropriately in the school and is impacting positively on classroom practices in relation to literacy.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- In accordance with Circular Letter 0007/2016, the board of management should ensure that all teaching posts allocated for mainstream classes are deployed appropriately.
- To enhance pupils' early language development, the whole-school oral language plan should be further developed to provide for discrete language development for all pupils.
- There should be closer alignment between the oral language initiatives that are implemented across the school and assessment data should be generated to evaluate the effectiveness of these initiatives.
- To enhance pupils' early learning in literacy through the medium of play, *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* should be implemented.

DETAILED FINDINGS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

1. THE QUALITY OF PUPILS' LEARNING

- The overall quality of pupils' learning in English is good. Pupils in almost all settings were observed to be enjoying their learning and were motivated to learn. There was evidence of progression in literacy for most pupils across class levels.
- Pupils' early literacy skill development is being progressed effectively in the school through the implementation of a range of station-teaching initiatives. Pupils' listening skills, phonological awareness, word recognition and word attack skills are being developed to a good standard in all settings.
- Pupils' oral language skills are being fostered appropriately at whole-school level. Language acquisition for pupils with English as an Additional Language (EAL) is being progressed through a combination of in-class and withdrawal support. The development of a whole-school oral language plan to support pupils' language development is commendable. To build on this good practice, a closer alignment between the whole-school oral language initiatives being implemented in the school should be established to support discrete and progressive oral language development for all pupils.
- Pupils' writing skills are being fostered to a good standard across the school. The whole-school focus on developing the functional and emergent writing skills of pupils is impacting positively on pupils learning experiences. A whole-school approach to the teaching of writing genres should now be implemented.
- The development of the *Literacy Lift-Off* initiative is commendable. This programme is supporting pupils effectively in the differentiation of their learning through the use of graded reading schemes. This highly effective practice should now be extended to other station-teaching initiatives in literacy.

2. SUPPORTING PUPILS' LEARNING: LEARNING EXPERIENCES AND TEACHERS' PRACTICE

- Pupils' learning experiences in literacy are of a good quality, overall. Teachers' classrooms and the wider school environment present as stimulating and print-rich. The speech and language class is providing high quality support for pupils with speech and language impairment.
- Interactions between teachers and pupils are highly respectful. Pupils are enabled to discuss and present their learning collaboratively and independently. In most settings, pupils' learning in English is integrated across curricular concepts.
- Pupils' learning through play is being explored in junior infant classrooms. To further enhance this process, *Aistear: the Early Childhood Curriculum Framework* should be implemented in the school. The implementation of *Aistear* should also be aligned with current whole-school oral language initiatives.
- In the lessons observed, pupils had access to a range of learning resources in literacy. These included graded-reading schemes, literacy games, story sacks and concrete material. In a few settings information and communications technology (ICT) was used to support learning in English. The use of ICT as a literacy resource needs to be extended at whole-school level.
- Overall, the quality of teachers' practice including assessment is good, with evidence of highly effective practice in some settings and of satisfactory practice in a small number of settings. The current structure of support provision should be developed to maximise in-class support for all pupils. The use of assessment to plan and review the *Literacy Lift-Off* programme is highly commendable and this practice should be extended to all whole-school literacy initiatives.
- Teachers use a range of methodologies to support pupils' learning in literacy. Where highly effective practice was evident, teachers shared the learning objective with pupils and used

differentiated reading material to provide the appropriate challenge for all pupils. Pupils' comprehension skill development was supported in the majority of settings through high quality questioning by teachers.

- A mainstream class teacher is deployed in a support teaching role in the school. The deployment of the teacher in this capacity is not in accordance with Circular Letter 0007/2016 and it has increased the number of pupils in mainstream classes. School management should ensure that all teaching posts allocated for mainstream classes are deployed appropriately.

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

- Overall, the quality of school planning, including the school self-evaluation (SSE) process is good. Almost all teachers develop high quality planning in English which is guided by the whole-school English plan. Teachers' collaborative planning for the *Literacy Lift-Off* initiative is of a very good quality and should be used to guide planning for other station-teaching programmes in the school.
- The school has engaged appropriately in the SSE process to date. A school improvement plan (SIP) for literacy was developed through collaboration with all school partners. The development of whole-school and individual tracking of pupils' progress is commendable. It was evident during the evaluation that the SSE process is impacting positively on whole-school oral language development practices.
- To further develop current practice in SSE planning, the in-school management team needs to rigorously analyse whole-school assessment data to prioritise current areas for school improvement. Specific and measurable learning targets should be developed for improvement in literacy.

Appendix

SCHOOL RESPONSE TO THE REPORT

Submitted by the Board of Management

Part A Observations on the content of the inspection report

The staff and board of management of St. Mary's Junior Boys' N.S. welcome the positive affirmation of the quality of teaching and learning in the school. We believe that the inspection report is a fair and accurate assessment of pupils learning and the effectiveness of teachers practice and school planning,

We welcome the acknowledgement of the good practices already in existence to support the teaching of English. We accept that the recommendations are achievable and that they will enhance the high quality of teaching and learning in the school.

The board is confident that these high standards will be maintained and further developed in the coming years.

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

- Since the inspection the board of management have taken measures to ensure that the school is compliant with circular 0007/2016 and all teaching posts allocated for mainstream classes are now deployed appropriately.
- Aistear is currently being implemented in both Junior and Senior Infant classes.
- An Oral Language Assessment will be purchased for the school to evaluate the effectiveness of the current oral language initiatives implemented.
- The whole school oral language plan will be further developed with emphasis on providing discrete language development for all pupils.

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.

Level	Description	Example of descriptive terms
Very Good	Very good 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.	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
Good	Good 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
Satisfactory	Satisfactory 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
Fair	Fair 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
Weak	Weak 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;